



A BRETON MAIDEN.

VOL. I.



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A BRETON MAIDEN

BY

A FRENCH LADY

AUTHOR OF "TILL MY WEDDING-DAY."

"A troubled record
A simple record and serene."

SWINBURNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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A BRETON MAIDEN.

CHAPTER I.

‘DE CARNOËT, examine me long and carefully, and tell me if I really am the same elegant and brilliant chevalier you knew yesterday! Do I appear to you as charming and as much of a lady-killer as ever? Look at my hands and feet! Gaze at the beauty of my face, and say if there is not some change in me! Am I the man to whom our beautiful Queen said but a short time since, “Monsieur de Valvourgs, it is unfair of you to come with all the

charms of the courtier to our humble farm of Trianon!" I pray you, De Carnoët, look at me and say if I am in truth that same man!

And the young man, assuming the most striking and graceful attitudes, stood before his friend. He was indeed most charming—young, bright, and handsome; with large black eyes and that dark complexion common to men of the south. He was dressed in a silk and satin suit, embroidered with silver and gold; with rich lace round his neck, and rich lace falling over his dainty, small hands.

‘Well, De Valvourgs, I knew you to be vain; but not to such an extent! What can have happened to you?’

‘Happened! The most startling, surprising, astonishing, amazing, stupifying thing in the world! Throw your tongue to the dogs! (style Seigné!)—Give it up,

my dear De Carnoët, and listen. I am a married man !

No !

‘ I am — a — married — man ! I am, I believe, neither bigger nor smaller than yesterday ; neither more serious nor more frivolous ; yet for me everything is changed.’

‘ You married ! I do not see . . . ’

‘ Yes, married ! Can you not fancy me leading one tender nursling by my right hand and one by my left ; or, like King Henry the Fourth of worthy memory, playing at horses and on all fours to amuse the bantlings ? I, a married man — the father of a family ! I am undone ! I am undone !’

‘ When you explain yourself, I may be able to understand.’

‘ It all comes from this : I was invited to the house of a Dowager-Countess I had never

seen before ;—I came, I saw, I conquered, and I am to be married forthwith.’

‘ To the Dowager?’

‘ No, not quite so bad as that! To her granddaughter, an orphan.’

‘ But if she is young, rich, and pretty—’

‘ Young, rich, and pretty!—You speak comfortably, you who are left in all the blessedness of bachelordom; but is there anything in the world that can compensate a man for the loss of his liberty? The truth is, however, that she is young and rich. But as to her beauty I know absolutely nothing about it; yet I marry her all the same.’

‘ It is most gallant. But who forces . . .?’

‘ Who else but my uncle could force me, since it is he who holds the purse-strings—my uncle, who has never married—thank Heaven—and who has lived all his life in independence of Court

and men?—You should have seen him this morning, seated bolt upright in his stiff arm-chair, with his grand Louis XIV.'s air, one leg crossed carefully over the other, and trifling with his jewelled snuff-box while he talked to me! He had sent for me, and I bowed low before him on entering his room, as behoves the heir-presumptive; and he replied to my salutation with a keen look and an amused smile.—My uncle is no fool, and on the whole, though his heir, I am rather fond of him.—“My nephew,” he said, “I am glad to see you punctual at the rendezvous; punctuality is a kingly virtue.” I bent low and said to myself—“And of a nephew who hopes for a heritage.”—He seemed to read my thoughts, and, smiling still, went on, “I have to speak to you on a matter of great importance.” And he looked so

kind and well-intentioned that I said to myself, "Good heavens! is he going to make me his heir now?" But he—"Pray sit down, nephew, it will enable you to bear more comfortably with my news." I sat down, and he resumed. "You know, my dear nephew, that your forefathers have always been personages of some importance at Court; particularly at that of Louis XIV.—that Court *par excellence*! It was a good idea of His Majesty to invite all his great noblemen to come and render him homage and contribute to his glory; for what could be more delightful than to see the highest in the land vie with one another in all kinds of exciting pleasures and vanities, and prove to the world at large, that the French nobility could be the most elegant as well as the most extravagant of those days! Yes, it was charming,—but it was high-priced. Be

proud, therefore, that your forefathers were great at Court, and pleased that they amused themselves right royally. Only the misfortune is that they died ruined, and left you no money to live upon.—But this is an honour also, since they spent their fortunes to please their sovereign.—Fortunately for you, however, the sons of my ancestors, soldiers from father to son, were satisfied with shining at the head of their regiments, which is not so costly a game; and to-day you are the heir of their glory too. But on one condition—never forget that—that you satisfy me and do my will to the end.”

‘I felt rather snubbed; but, anxious to assure him of my obedience, I said,

“Uncle, I would never——”

“Yes, yes, you are very well; you spend your money in a manner worthy of

your ancestors, and I find no special fault with you so far.—But now I am going to ask you to do something to please me. I wish you to marry.”

““I marry!” I cried, alarmed beyond description.—How thankful I was to be seated!

““I offer you my Château de Cahors with an income that will enable you to shine a little; but, as for you it is necessary to shine much, you will have to contribute your share; and I have ready exactly what you require—a young girl barely eighteen, whose fortune will enable you to live as you please.”

““But, uncle——” I cried, in despair. Without noticing my interruption, however, he continued,

““Otherwise you have left as a resource to follow in my steps and those of my forefathers, and join the army.”

““ But, uncle, it is impossible that——”

““ Impossible ! Surely you are not married already ?”

““ No, no ! that is just what I meant to say. It is too soon to marry at twenty-six—just think, twenty-six”

‘ But, my dear De Carnoët, what shall I say ? I begged and begged at least for time ; I even threatened to kill myself—which amused him very much, and made me laugh too on second thoughts. But it was all of no use. It is settled ; and there is no hope left for me. Oh ! that Dowager, that Dowager, I shall never forgive her.’

‘ It was your own fault, always running from conquest to conquest ! Imagine what a very different future there would be before you if you had not pleased—that Dowager !’

‘ You are laughing at me. But, all the same, it is an awful thing to be called

suddenly to break with all that makes life delightful.'

'And when is it to be?'

'Very soon. In fact my uncle is terribly anxious about what is going on here in Paris. He thinks we are simpletons to wait quietly for all these dreadful things to cease of themselves instead of preparing for an inevitable struggle. He is furious with the nobles who are giving up their feudal privileges—"their rightful inheritance," as he says—and with the others who are running away, as if they could not see it was the most fatal course they could adopt;—for has it not been said often enough, "*les absents ont toujours tort.*" He is leaving Paris himself; but only to go to his own place in Provence—disgusted with it all, and really frightened at the consequences he foresees. He was a soldier, as I have told you, and nothing will

do for him but to call all the *noblesse* to arms and gather them round the throne. He thinks—excuse me, De Carnoët—that we are all cowards for allowing the king so tamely to submit to his fate, and for looking on in such a state of helplessness, and swallowing outrage after outrage without giving sign of life. He has ordered me to leave Paris at once; and I must very soon start for Brittany.’

‘Brittany? Why?’

‘To see my future wife there.’

‘In Brittany?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where? What is her name? What . . .’

‘Do not get excited, please;—you who always preach to me to be calm, and who so haughtily blame the outbursts of my hasty disposition!’

‘My dear fellow, I am a Breton—you have forgotten that; and your going to

Brittany on such an important matter cannot but interest me deeply. Where is it you are going?’

‘To the Château de Kerguennec.’

‘Impossible!’

‘Why? I see nothing impossible in that.’

‘It is so strange; the Château is close to my birthplace, and I know the Comte and Comtesse de Kerguennec. But who is it you are going to marry?’

‘Their niece.’

‘Niece? Which one? What is her name?’

‘Renée de Kerguennec.’

‘Renée! ah, I know her. How extraordinary!’

‘You know her? Oh, how glad I am! What kind of a girl is she? Tall? short? fair? dark? handsome? pretty? ugly? What? which?’

‘My dear chevalier, I am sorry that I cannot tell you.’

‘Cannot tell me! and yet you say you know her?’

‘I knew her, I should have said, when she was a child of ten or eleven; but she left for the *Couvent* after her father’s death, when her uncle and aunt came to live at Kerguennec; and since she has lived there, I have been in Paris.’

‘And you do not call me the most unfortunate of men? I thought you would tell me all about her. But as a girl of ten or eleven what was she like?’

‘Like all little girls of that age, I think.’

‘You think! Ah! it is easy to see that my miserable fate does not touch your heart. If you were in my position, how I should grieve for you and try to comfort

you ! Just imagine a man actually on his way to marry a girl he has never seen and to whom one answers calmly that she was ‘Like all little girls of that age, I think !’ And you do not pity me ?’

‘Not much. I should be more inclined to pity her ; a girl of eighteen is scarcely like a child who does not know her own mind ; and it is a matter of some importance to her also, if she knows about the intended marriage and is expecting you.’

‘Well, yes, after all I suppose it is ; but, upon my word of honour, I had not thought of considering it in that light before. You see, I do not know what she is—good or bad, angel or shrew. I cannot guess what her dreams for the future may be, and whether I am called to fulfil them ; while I know what I am and what my wishes are. I know that I wish for

liberty, just as in the past. And, as to my temper, am I not always amiable and charming, easy to please and satisfy, &c., &c.'

And the two youngmen laughed heartily.

Upon the whole, young De Valvourgs was right—he was amiable and easy-tempered enough—and, having once told his friend of his misfortune, which did not seem to lie very deep under the surface, he felt much comforted.

He had all the quickness and vivacity of the Provençal, and all his great power of speech; indeed, it was often as if thoughts came to him through much speaking. He was very imaginative, very sensitive, and very fond of pleasure, which was, in fact, the chief aim of his life. But he was a man of honour, and this was the link between the two young men, who differed in almost everything else.

De Carnoët was of a sober disposition, —a Breton, calm, simple, upright, and true. He was much sought after by the better men, and even by his gay companions, who knew they could trust him. He was tall, had a fine face, with deep-blue eyes, which had in them the dreaminess so generally found in the Breton who has lived all his life near the *Landes*, with their vast expanses of heath and broom. Although he had been for some years in Paris, the impressions of his early youth clung to him as much as ever; and these had been of a serious nature.

The result of the conversation between the two young men was that they decided to go together to Brittany. De Carnoët was glad to think of doing the honours of his country to his friend, who on his part said he felt much more courageous in his company against the troubles that might

await him in the courtship of his bride-elect.

Mounted on good horses, and accompanied by servants well armed, they started soon after on their journey—a long and difficult one in those times—and some days after they reached the borders of Brittany.

From that moment all seemed changed for them; they forgot the atmosphere of blood and murder, excitement and pain, they had long lived in in Paris, and felt their hearts expand, their thoughts purified, and the fear of the future disappearing. Everywhere around them were pretty views, quaint hamlets and villages lost in the silence of the fields—everything spoke of peace, and calm, and security.

The young Provençal fell at once under the soothing influence. He felt sure now that Renée de Kerguennec

must be sweet and gentle, and that he was going to a life of peace and happiness. How could a woman living among such picturesque and simple surroundings be proud and ambitious, harsh or unkind?

They had travelled for some time, when the landscape changed suddenly before them. To abundance and fertility succeeded a barren land,—almost a desert ; and life itself seemed extinct. There was scarcely anything to break the solemn sadness of the sea of furze and broom and heath which on all sides bounded the horizon, except that at times eyes and mind, tired by the monotony of the thirsty and sterile land, were arrested by the gigantic dolmens of granite, or by the huge menhirs crowned indeed by the cross, but mysterious and awful relics of a religion which exists no longer.

But the landscape changed once more ; they passed deep and sunless villages ; and dark and rugged hills shut out all the view, till suddenly a bright white line appeared far away at the horizon, telling them of the sea, limitless and immense—the sea that speaks of freedom from all narrow bonds, that makes men bold and hopeful ; the sea that enlarges the soul with thoughts of eternity.

Suddenly De Carnoët touched his friend's arm. They had reached a high table-land, swathed in the green of the hills, and dotted here and there with clumps of vigorous and healthy fir-trees. Below the sheer precipice at their feet, the sea roared and dashed against the granite rocks of the deep bay it had hollowed out for itself during the course of centuries. The rocks shook under the violence of its blows, and huge columns of water and

spray were launched with irresistible force in the air.

The thought that this turmoil lasted for ever, and that a tempest might increase it a thousandfold, was almost too much for the human mind to conceive and bear with; yet on the extreme point of the headland, at the entrance of the bay, where the waters raged with the utmost fierceness, and raised high on its precipitous rocks, stood a large castle of bygone days, with the proud outlines of its towers and battlements stretching against a bright, clear sky. It looked so bold, so invincible, so proud, that the chevalier remained entranced at the sight, and in a moment imagination had recalled to him the poetry of the past—those knights clad in armour, and spear in hand, bent on redressing wrong; or those armies of mounted warriors, with clanking steel, rushing to

the attack, and the castle, at the blast of its fanfares, ready to receive its enemies and destroy them;—or else preparing a gorgeous pageant to welcome its friends and give them a royal hospitality.

As the young Provençal gazes at the sight, a name reaches his ear above the tumult of the waves—

‘Kerguennec.’

And, turning round, his eyes question his friend.

‘Yes, that is the Château de Kerguennec.’

The young man feels the blood of youth mantle his cheeks and forehead, and make his heart beat violently—Kerguennec! and Renée—that Renée de Kerguennec he is coming to see lives there! Ah! surely a descendant of this noble and fearless race should be worth the winning!

When brought at last face to face with what is now plainly seen to be but the

ruins of a past glory—the glamour still upon him, he crosses the pont-levis head erect, defiant of what fate may have in reserve for him behind those mouldering walls.

CHAPTER II.

THE two young men, whose arrival had been announced by a courier, found their host ready to welcome them; and, having got rid of the dust of the high-road, but still in their travelling dress, they went for their first introduction to the ladies of the Château, the Comtesse and Mademoiselle de Kerguennec.

They were received in a large, handsome hall with high oriel mullioned windows emblazoned with many a crest and shield, through which the sun fell in soft rays of coloured light on the dark panelled walls and highly-polished floor.

The comtesse was half reclining on a low chair; she was about thirty-five years old, fair, and of delicate features, and looked very ill. Coming with graceful carriage from the end of the room, Renée de Kerguennec stood before them, a charming vision; and the chevalier, who, after profound salutations, had scarcely dared to look at her, was struck with her extreme beauty.

She was tall and erect, and with a splendour of health that contrasted delightfully with the sickly looks of her aunt. Her hair, raised high and loose on the top of the head, was dark chestnut; her eyes were brown; her complexion dazzling; her well-curved mouth and lips were most pleasant; and her wide, white brow spoke of no common intellect.

Low and sweet was her voice as she welcomed the stranger, and charming her

smile as she renewed acquaintance with Rohan de Carnoët, her play-fellow of seven or eight years before.

So she was not only young and rich, but also beautiful, this bride De Valvourgs had been sent to claim! And suddenly a feeling of wild enthusiasm swept over the young man—to vanish almost as suddenly before a rapid, impulsive survey of his past life and of his own merits, which left him disconsolate and dissatisfied with himself—a new and very unwelcome feeling.

As his friend had told him, he had thought only of himself in coming to Brittany, and now he was ashamed of his selfishness, for he realized how important to the girl before him was the kind of husband who had been deemed worthy of her! Would she ever think that he was worthy? Would he ever win this

handsome and intelligent girl who had been chosen for him? Would she ever put her hand in his and agree to their being called husband and wife? It was preposterous,—impossible! The more he thought of it, the feebler his chance of winning her seemed to be; and by the end of the interview he told himself that he would fail.

And, once alone in their rooms, De Valvourgs' usual flow of words burst forth. How was it that his friend had not seen the promise of such beauty in the child of ten? Had De Carnoët tried to keep the knowledge of it from him on purpose, so that he might be struck down from the first and fall helplessly in love?—And he had so fallen, and his happiness was no longer in his own keeping! Ah! that he had never left Paris! How could he help seeing the difficulties and troubles before

him ! Such a woman to win ! She was beyond all the dreams and all the poetical fancies of his youth. How could he ever expect her to love him ! Ah ! that he had never left Paris !

His friend, accustomed to his way of talking, only laughed.

‘How charming to think that after all this will be a love-match,’ he said.

‘A love-match ! De Carnoët ! What do you mean ? What have you seen in her that can make you say that ? A love-match ! Do you intend to make me believe that she—that you could see in her—signs ?—Impossible ! Speak, I entreat you, speak !’

‘She has not told me yet,’ replied the other, who was as full of satisfaction as his friend of fear : ‘but I noticed how her eyes followed every one of your movements ; and how they were even raised now and then

to your face. And I noticed, too, how oblivious of my humble self she was! Yes, I saw it all, marked it all,—not one sign of her interest in you escaped me. And I feel glad for your sake that she is beautiful; and I am proud of the happiness you will have in showing your Breton bride to the world.'

And yet the young man sighed.

'Thanks, De Carnoët, thanks, it is kind of you to feel so for me. But will she ever be my wife? Alas! I doubt it! Do not laugh at me; but I have never felt so nervous before, so—unworthy of a woman. Till now the society of women has always been so pleasant; I was always so welcome; they made so much of me and it was so easy for me to reciprocate their attentions and praises—an exchange of frivolities, in fact. But how will frivolity answer here? Badly, I fear; and I do not

feel able to be serious, to be serious always.
—What shall I do?’

‘Wait before you despair; a few days will tell us much of what she is. But I believe her to be as charming as she is beautiful. She only spoke a few words of recognition to me; just to be civil, you understand; yet they fell on my ear like a grateful sound. I believe I shall never forget her saying, “We were play-fellows once, were we not, Monsieur de Carnoët?” You are a fortunate man, De Valvourgs; and you will have to thank heartily that Dowager-Countess after all.’

‘I do not see it like you; I dread to love her; and I dread her not loving me. I am just now a perfect coward ready for flight. Ah! uncle, uncle, whatever put it into your head to marry me!’

‘Looking forward to the bantlings on the right and on the left, eh?’

‘If she refuses me, De Carnoët, what shall I do?’

‘She will not. You—flying from flower to flower, choosing and forgetting the most beautiful—who could refuse you?—But now let us go and dress. I suppose you will don one of your bewitching coats and put me in the shade as you always do?’

‘I never heard you complain of that before; nor did you appear to mind. But, do you know, somehow I don’t seem to care for the brilliant suits I brought with me; I wish I had something of a more serious character, something more sober, something less showy, less——’

‘Change with me.’

‘Ah! no, no!—Love! love! have I met with thee at last?’

‘But it is so sudden—so very sudden! Do you really believe in it?—To tell you the truth, I do not.’

‘Alas! I do. De Carnoët, let us flee, let us rush back to Paris.’

‘Thanks. Not till after dinner. You see, I am not in love like you. After dinner, chevalier, let us put it off till after dinner!’

And, laughing, the two friends retired to the important cares of their toilets.

Visitors from Paris were welcome in the country in those times of stirring events, and the conversation at dinner naturally flowed on the topics of the day. They talked of the rebellion in Paris, as it was still called by many; they talked of the fall of the Bastille with a laugh—that old Bastille which had become of so little use of late, and which certainly was not in the habit of sheltering the poor behind its walls! What could have made the populace wreak its vengeance upon it? Bread would be none the less dear for that

exploit! They talked of the National Guard, with Lafayette at its head; of his fatuity when, taking up the blue and red cockade of the citizen soldiers and placing the white one of royalty in the midst, he had declared that the red, white, and blue cockade would conquer the world!

The comte, a staunch Breton, was no admirer of the Court at Paris; and its troubles, he thought, were deserved; but it was hard that the *noblesse* who had lived in the country all their life, and looked after the welfare of their people, should have to pay for the mistakes of others. His feudal privileges he had given up long ago; still he did not like to see it passed into a law that they should be abolished for ever.

The comtesse, in a gentle voice, said to her neighbour,

‘And so you have left Paris too, Monsieur de Valvourgs. I hear that many

have done so already. Will not Their Majesties feel very much the void thus made around them?’

‘Ah! but I should not have left it of my own accord,’ exclaimed the young man, carried away by his loyalty. ‘My devotion to the Queen is such that I would be there near her now, and at all times of danger, if I had my choice.’

When he had thus spoken, he found the eyes of Mademoiselle de Kerguennec fixed on him with a strange expression in them.

‘The feeling honours you,’ the comtesse went on. ‘I suppose this rebellion will not last long?’

The chevalier did not feel at his ease, and replied, tamely enough,

‘We all think so. The populace was angry; but, having done such grand things, it will rest now, no doubt. My uncle’s opinion is that all the *noblesse* should come

forward and surround the throne, and give the king the help and countenance he needs. But it would be called civil war, I suppose.'

'It would lead to it,' said the comte, 'but it would not last long, though they say we are so few nobles left:—one hundred and ten thousand out of twenty-six million men. It does not seem much, does it? Richelieu would be glad, if he knew.'

'One hundred and ten thousand noble-men would soon crush all the citizen battalions.'

'Yes; and Lafayette will tell you that it is to keep order and watch over the king he has raised the National Guard. They would fight with us.'

'Surely we scarcely need their aid.'

'But there will be no fighting. I expect the next news will tell us that all is at peace.'

‘It is so strange,’ said the comtesse, ‘to hear of those rumours of war in our quiet part of the world; we seem fast asleep in the past. And, let them say what they please in Paris against the *noblesse*, we are safe in our feudal homes; our Bretons are such a quiet people.’

‘Quiet, yes; but they can fight, trust them for that,’ replied the comte, laughing. ‘Fortunately, they have no occasion for fighting.’

‘No, they will not fight and rebel, like those peasants who have burnt down châteaux and convents elsewhere,’ said Monsieur Brevelaye, the curé, who had spoken very little till then. ‘For whom or against whom, should they fight? Has not Monsieur le Comte truly said, that the nobleman of Brittany lives among his people, and sees after their wants and relieves their more grievous burdens? We are like

so many patriarchal families. It is only the master who has deserted and oppressed his people who has reason to fear.'

Upon the whole, the speech of the curé, though intended to allay the fears of those around him, struck a more warlike note than all that had been said before, and the comte looked at him across the table, his eyebrows slightly drawn together.

'There will be no fighting among us,' he repeated; 'and, if there was, Monsieur le Curé would be the first to stop it.'

'He would never bless fighting for an unjust cause,' replied the curé, simply.

'He would never allow it at all,' persisted the comte.

The curé did not reply, and they all rose.

The evening was splendid, the sea calm and lovely, and the noise of its waves at so great a height came like a soothing

music that mixed itself with the soft words and the perfume of flowers.

The comte proposed a walk through some parts of the ruins, and the comtesse, excusing herself because of her weakness, was left behind with the curé.

The part of the Château now inhabited had been rebuilt and kept up at different times, and offered nothing extraordinary; but there were left still, from past ages, nooks and corners and unexpected surprises, which the young men enjoyed seeing in the company of Mademoiselle de Kerguennec.

She had talked very little during the dinner, but now she joined her uncle in showing the old ruins to the best advantage; and to their surprise they found her full of that quiet fun which is so delightful in a well-bred woman; and the Chevalier de Valvourgs told himself that

he had never been so happy in his life.

‘Now I will take you,’ said the comte, ‘to our grand show, the abode of our best ghost or thereabouts ; for we have a few ghosts, great and small, graduated according to the vastness of their crimes in the days of their flesh, or to the imagination of their inventors. What should we be without our ghosts and legends in Brittany ? What do you say, Rohan ?’

‘We should be nothing. I could not understand our country without them.’

Having crossed several rooms in a fair state of preservation, they came to one in a round tower, and suddenly the sea seemed to borrow a mighty voice and its waters to struggle and tear and fight like souls tormented down below. Through the narrow, cross-shaped loopholes the vast ocean was seen in the distance rolling

solemnly and majestically under a canopy of clouds, regardless of the turmoil at the foot of the precipice.

‘This turret,’ said the comte, ‘which must have been used as an extra prison, is known as the “Threshold of Death ;” cheerful, is it not ?’

‘Fairly so.’

‘The waters have hollowed out for themselves a deep cavern, where the fearful battle is for ever renewed ; but it is the hand of man that has partly blocked its opening ; so that the victim falling into the whirlpool down below, should never be carried away and reveal the secret of his death. No vessel can approach it without being shipwrecked, and no human foot can climb down the precipices that surround it ; nevertheless, according to the legend, a man attempted it, accomplished it, and died of grief on the rocks

below, before the sight that was revealed to him.'

'Why? how was that?'

'Renée will tell you, she delights in all these things; and it really takes too much out of one of my age to relate them. Now, Renée, we are listening.'

The young girl smiled, and said,

'This is idleness, sir.'

Then, becoming serious, her two hands folded before her, her eyes fixed afar as if forgetful of her audience, she began :

'In the neighbourhood of Kerguennec lived a baron, and his castle was as strong as this one. The neighbours, bold and brave and fierce warriors both, had unfortunately quarrelled and were deep-rooted enemies. It happened, in the course of time, that they also became rivals in love. Both fell in love with a maiden as beautiful as the day, and as

good as the angels in Heaven. But she had been promised and betrothed to the powerful baron, the enemy of the Comte de Kerguennec.

‘The baron had taken a vow of going to Palestine, so he thought it best at once to keep his vow in order not to be separated from his bride after his marriage. Leaving his betrothed in his château under his mother’s care, and a strong guard of faithful men, he set out for the Holy Land. He had gone some distance when a blast upon the horn of one of his fleetest messengers made him turn round, and he learned with grief and rage that the young girl had been seized; that she was at Kerguennec in this castle, and that his rival had resolved upon immediately marrying her.

‘The young baron and his small band of retainers utter cries of malediction and vengeance; they turn their horses’ heads

towards home again ; they ride in hot haste ; they rush forward ; the trumpet sounds far and wide ; the baron's numerous vassals are assembled ; and the valiant army, animated by fierce hopes of revenge, press on to the walls of Kerguennec.

‘Nothing can check the furious attack ; the warriors win the besieged place ; uttering loud cries of victory, they search the castle for their conquered foe. They reach this spot, and the guilty man pays the forfeit with his life.

‘But in the midst of the shouts of triumph, heart-rending screams, the screams of a woman, are heard coming from below ; —the fierce comte has had time to dispose of his victim. To see whence the cries come is impossible, but the baron in his mad grief dashes down the ramparts, urges his friends to follow him, and leaps from rock to rock, from abyss to abyss,

and surmounts every obstacle. At last they see him pause, his eyes are fixed with horror on the whirlpool where the raging waters are lashed into fury by the tempest ; then, uttering a piercing cry and extending his arms as one fascinated, he calls on her he loved, and falls dead before the victim whose cries have long ceased to be heard.

‘ Never again did the young baron and his beautiful *fiancée* tread the soil of their native land ; never again did the halls of their homes resound with their laughter ; their promises of love were buried in the waves ; but two unhappy spirits ever since wander round this chamber of death, uttering moans and lamentations ; and on stormy nights their voices are plainly heard crying, “ Woe, woe to Kerguennec ! Woe, woe ! Let its fall be great—woe to Kerguennec ! ” ’

And, raising her hand,

‘Hark!’ she murmured low.

And the sea below seemed to sigh—

‘Ker-guen-nec!’

The young men had never taken their eyes off her face while she told the fate of the victims of her lawless ancestor; and the young chevalier’s heart vibrated at her words like the harp touched by a master-hand. The comte it was who broke the silence.

‘Nice, is it not? A charming way of getting rid of troublesome friends or hated enemies.’

‘But the entrance of the cave?’

‘Ah! never ask for particulars when you are told a legend.’

‘Then that Threshold——?’

‘The secret of the passage is lost. In my youth I tried to discover it. I had workmen here, but they were not to the

manner born, and the secret is a secret still.'

'Then it really is all a myth, I suppose?'

'Would you prefer it to be otherwise? However, there is no doubt about the oubliette down below, for, when the sea is calm and the light good, we can see from the distance the cave beneath, with its heavy rocks crosswise barring the entrance. There might have been another kind of entrance to it; but a legend is a legend, you know, and has its way of explaining matters.'

As they were returning to the house, the chevalier said, in a subdued voice, to Renée de Kerguennec,

'Do not such stories haunt you in the stormy nights, mademoiselle?'

'They are so very, very old,' she replied, with a smile.

'But a curse is abiding, and sorrow

predicted must—— I would not that a breath of sorrow came near you, *mademoiselle*.’

She looked up quickly in his face.

‘You almost make me afraid,’ she laughed; ‘but I thank you for the feeling of kindness implied. Only, be comforted, so many generations of brave and good men have passed away with their joys and their sorrows since those days of legend; and, besides, the destiny of every human being—the destiny of the last of the Kerguennees which I am—is it not in God’s hand?’

CHAPTER III.

TIME passed quickly at the Château ; many invitations had been made, and many visitors, old and young, from all parts of the neighbourhood came to hear the last news from those who had just left the king and queen. Great animation prevailed ; expeditions and friendly calls filled the time, and the noise of horses and carriages during the day, and the music and dancing at night, made the old place ring with the sounds of life again.

A grand race those Breton gentlemen were, with their strongly-built frames, round heads, and keen black or blue eyes.

Men of granite, borrowing their strength from the pure atmosphere of their country and the purity of their lives. They questioned the young men with that genuine and exquisite kindness of heart which, with love of independence, forms the principal trait in the Breton character. Simple, discreet, earnest, self-contained, and self-reliant they were; and the stranger was welcome at their hearths.

Some still wore the Breton dress: the wide Gaelic plaited breeches, the round coat with its extraordinary number of buttons, and long embroidered vest, and shoes with large buckles; while their long hair, cut close on the front of the head in the style of the old Merovingian kings, floated on their shoulders.

And a noble costume it was, even though the peasants wore the same; those peasants with whom the seigneurs seemed

to live on a footing of equality and friendship.

So these were the Bretons in their homes, those Bretons so ill-judged and so often laughed at in Paris! And it could but add to the pleasure of the young stranger's visit to Brittany to find himself among men not only differently dressed from the ordinary inhabitants of France, and with different customs and manners, but also with the traditions of a glorious past fresh upon them. To be with the descendants of a strong and warlike race, which for more than six centuries had held its own against powerful and hateful neighbours—the Kings of France; sometimes fighting them alone, sometimes with the help of the English, and sometimes fighting the English themselves and disputing with them the supremacy of the Channel. To recollect while among them how some

of those Englishmen had at different times taken a foothold in Brittany, and lived in the barbarous style that led to the immortal *Combat des Trente*, and the cause of that fight;—how Beaumanoir had said to Sir Bembrough at Ploërmel, ‘Knight of England, it is a shame for you to chain like oxen by two and three, and flog and torment the peasants as you do, the peasants who labour in the fields, and through whose labour we get corn and wine! Truly, if they did not do the work for us, we noblemen would even have to do it ourselves, and endure their privations and hardships. Cease, therefore, I pray you, to injure them.’ To which Bembrough had replied: ‘Know that the English race is born to conquer and rule everywhere; therefore, Beaumanoir, hold thy peace.’ And then they had fought that wonderful fight and the Breton won.

Or else, how the English had lived among them as friends, and how Jean de Montfort, who had crushed his rival with their help, loved them so that he loaded them with honours and gave them all the high posts to fill in the duchy, till his barons and noblemen grumbled and gave him the choice either to send them away or to go away himself;—which last he chose to do and retired to England. And how, when the French king saw the Bretons without their duke, he sent an army to take possession of the duchy, and the Bretons sent to him and he came back—people falling on their knees before him and weeping with joy at his return. And how they then fought the King of France, and the Bretons won again.

But he had yet to learn that since the marriage of Anne de Bretagne with Louis XII. of France, and the powerful

enemy had had a voice in the parliament of Brittany, vexations had never ceased, king after king proving himself to be the enemy of the Breton independence—a question of life and death now to the Breton who had never yielded, but had rebelled, conspired, and fought to the last.

And how, throughout those centuries of struggle for independence, the peasant had gone hand in hand with his master, fighting with him with the same indomitable courage, the same unconquerable will. It was no wonder the Breton peasant remained attached to that master, no wonder the seigneur loved the peasant.

But these seigneurs were the men who had gradually become proud of the advanced civilization of France, and were ready to associate with her and even uphold her ideas, little dreaming what these would soon be. They now thought it a

shame that the French king and queen should suffer such indignities at the hands of their subjects, and they despised that power of a day, as they believed it to be, that Republic which, caring nothing for what was glorious in the past, seemed to have no work but to destroy.

Still they did not want war. They meant to remain at peace in the midst of the turmoil of events going on in Paris, safe among their devoted peasants. And so no doubt they would have remained but for the priest in their midst—that lowly peasant-priest, so devoid of ambition, who was to be the cause that torrents of blood should be shed in the unhappy country.

Monsieur Brevelaye, the *recteur*, or *curé*, of Kerguennec, was a fair specimen of his class. He was a tall man, with a slight stoop acquired by hard study. He stood out from the rest of the visitors at the

Château, clad in his long priestly garments, humble and generally silent, but with the same courtly manner as the noblemen he was with. He was a peasant's son, who, when a lad, had been a goat-herd or had held the plough, till his pious mother and father, but more especially his brother, determined to make him a priest. To their hard life of labour was to be added another burden;—further privations, where already there was so little to spare, had to be devised. But once having thought of that great honour—a priest in the family—they never swerved from their purpose. The young lad joined in the general wish of his family and was sent to school and to long continued sorrow.

The peasant in Brittany was attached to his master, but the inhabitant of the town, little by little, had forgotten the Breton tongue and longings, and loved

the civilization which brought him an easier life. The peasants and the town people hated each other, as only earnest people can hate,—the peasants calling the former in their own tongue and with the deepest contempt, ‘*Galloued*,’—‘False Breton,’ or ‘Traitor to the Breton cause;’ the other being in no way behind in calling them savages. For the poor peasant lad, with his peasant clothes, his peasant manners, his Breton speech and ignorance of French, to be seated among the younger boys of the town, so different in everything, and so much more advanced than he was, there was many a moment of torture and misery. But slowly and surely the young scholar made his way, through trials and sorrows, and in spite of that more terrible pain still, home-sickness, to which the Breton is so prone, till one day, swallowed up in the *séminaire*, he lost his

dress and originality in exchange for the dress, and thoughts, and hopes of the priest.

Then at last has the reward come, he is a priest. He returns to his village, his heart bursting with longing towards his own. He reaches his lowly and beloved cottage ; he hears his parents speak ; but his father remains with uncovered head before him ; his mother kneels down for his blessing ; his brother, who has done so much for him, stands while he eats, waiting till he has done before he himself begins.

Outside, among the young girls his playmates once, some have become mothers ; others are still free, but he is a man of God, and all heads bow before him. No heart is there among them that will ever beat for him, never will he call a wife his own. The *sacerdoce* of the humble priest is renunciation, and renunciation is not joy, but a martyrdom freely chosen.

Circumstances call him in time to be the *recteur* of his own parish, and he enters the homes of the companions of his childhood as the best friend God has sent them upon earth. He crosses the threshold of that château he had looked up to with veneration and awe—a visitor, a friend, and a counsellor. He sits at the table of his seigneur, side by side with his most honoured guests. He is without pride or false shame; he is humble because of the unworthiness of the instrument God has chosen to carry out His designs upon earth; but he also knows the sacredness of his office, and that it is this these people honour in him.

And in 1790 he receives an order from Paris to swear that he will serve and obey the ‘Constitution.’ But he knows nothing about it, except that the king is being insulted when he should command,

and he refuses. He is told that, having refused to swear obedience to the new powers, he will have to give up his parish and his work to a stranger. But like a true Breton he waits, goes on unshaken with his harassed ministry, and means never to yield.

Perhaps the only one among the comte's guests, he had long foreseen that the peasants would rebel against the decree that deprived him of his office, if it ever was enforced. He sees it in the stern looks of the men of his flock, and in their deeper reverence; in the strong man who approaches him nearer as if to take him under his protection; in the woman who looks up to him as to one on the eve perhaps of becoming a martyr.

He sees it also in his brother Loïk, whose love is deep tenderness combined with deep reverence; who kneels down in

the dust to receive his blessing, and who will protect the priest who has lost all power of fighting upon earth in order to win souls for heaven. In the looks of that brother does he also read resistance.

A simple creed those men had. There is a God in heaven, and the priest is God's minister on earth ; therefore the priest must be honoured as one would honour God. But the peasants were not the only ones with this simple faith ; it went through all ranks, and the honour paid by the nobleman to his priest was also graced with the same intense conviction and earnestness.

Among these men one stood out from the rest, Monsieur Rohan de Carnoët, the father of the chevalier's friend, who, with his Breton dress, his long hair flowing on his shoulders, and his

fine face, was a remarkable man, and one of strong individuality. He seemed to command the respect of all, and the young chevalier wondered the more, because, having been taken to his Manoir by his son, he had found him to be a man of quiet, retired habits, and comparatively poor.

The Manoir, though a large and hospitable mansion, was devoid of most of the treasures of the past, so prized by a proud race of men—some rare pictures, now and then some jewelled sword of the Crusade days—but otherwise it was almost bare of things of value.

The sight of his friend's home made the chevalier understand how it was that Rohan de Carnoët had always resolutely refused to join in the more extravagant pleasures of the Court. Still it was not the lack of wealth, but more the stern

moral atmosphere that seemed to seize upon one. But even this failed to explain the respect paid to Monsieur de Carnoët by everyone.

He longed to ask who Monsieur de Carnoët was ; but meanwhile, noticing how his friend, who had known Mademoiselle de Kerguennec from her youth, stood aloof when all men pressed round her, he asked himself if it were not because of his poverty that he did so. He would, however, have done him more justice if he had seen in his retirement a question of honour. Rohan de Carnoët, knowing the understanding between the two families, and having been from the first the cavalier's confidant, felt it his duty to do nothing that would interfere with his friend's courtship ; and even carried the feeling to an extreme. No, his poverty was no disgrace, and would scarcely have

prevented his being accepted by Renée de Kerguennec as a suitor ; and this the chevalier would soon hear.

But there was another man who had not the scruples of Rohan, and who strongly resented the chevalier's presence at the Château.

Ydeuc de Trogloff was about thirty years of age. He had travelled much, knew the world, and had become an accomplished courtier. But he had all the defects of his people's good qualities ; was proud, irascible, obstinate, easily offended, and unforgiving.

From the first he had shown coldness to the chevalier, and the latter, quick to feel this, had returned his coldness with dislike. It was evident to everyone that De Trogloff was anxious to please Mademoiselle de Kerguennec, and it had not escaped him who had come to win her

for his bride. It was even said that Ydeuc de Trogloff had asked her in marriage and had been refused. No wonder, therefore, if the presence of the young chevalier at the Château—the purpose of which he could guess—was most disturbing to him.

But Mademoiselle de Kerguennec saw nothing of the growing enmity between the two men. Proud of her people and of the past; brave and fearless like them, but ever gentle and amiable, she fulfilled, with the greatest tact and courtesy, the duties of hostess, in order to relieve her aunt, who was unable to do anything.

Admired by all, she flitted from one to another, bringing freshness and pleasantness in her path. The chevalier—a stranger to her country, but the occasion of the present gathering of friends—had her first care. From her perfect simplicity and open behaviour towards all, it was evident

that no thought of pleasing him more than another had entered her mind; and that no thought of marriage had as yet disturbed her. If it was true that Ydeuc de Trogloff had failed once, there was no sign that he could be more successful were he to try again.

Although Rohan de Carnoët had impressed on his friend the importance of keeping watch over his quick southern temper, it was difficult to secure peace with one who was determined to have war, and a small incident took place which might have had serious consequences, and which Rohan never forgot.

The whole party were one day on horseback, when they came to a narrow causeway, where only one could ride at a time. Ydeuc de Trogloff, who knew of this, and who was incensed at seeing the chevalier close to Mademoiselle de Ker-

guennec all the time, managed his horse on approaching it so as to force the chevalier back, and himself pass the first after her. Had another done it, it might have been an accident caused by the restlessness of the horse ; but, coming from De Trogloff, the chevalier knew at once it had been done intentionally, and the hot blood of youth and anger rushed to his face. Yet he tried to quell the fury within him, and wait till away from Mademoiselle de Kerguennec to speak to him.

‘ I shall never forget,’ he said, ‘ that the only insult I have received in your hospitable land came from you.’

To which the other replied, haughtily,

‘ It is immaterial to me whether you do or not.’

In a moment he saw the chevalier raise his whip ; but with a laugh, as if to set him at defiance, he spurred his horse close

to him. Fortunately, the whole proceedings and the provocation offered to the chevalier had been witnessed by others; and several of the gentlemen rushed forward, entreating De Trogloff to desist from conduct which could only bring shame upon them all; and at last the two men were parted, the chevalier promising to forgive for his host's sake, but Ydeuc de Trogloff swearing he would always remember how they had all taken part against him.

To live at peace after such a scene was difficult, and the chevalier was thankful when he saw the number of guests diminish and Rohan and himself were left alone with the inhabitants of the Château.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE are some women who have the power of bringing out the best points in their fellow-creatures. They believe in the goodness of human nature, and see in others those good qualities which they most esteem and think they themselves lack : unconscious that it is their very faith which is producing the effect, though it may be but for a season. His spirit must be poor indeed who knows that one he loves or esteems believes him to be great and good, and who yet does not strive to reach the ideal he is thought to fulfil.

Thus the Chevalier de Valvourgs felt himself ennobled by his contact with Mademoiselle de Kerguennec. He who had never thought of anything but pleasure, and who had followed the bent of his natural disposition for good or for evil, felt within himself the highest aspirations, and would fain have done great things so that he might prove to her—and to himself—that he was not devoid of those feelings which she took for granted existed in him. He felt himself to be an altered man, little dreaming how transient the change might prove if he was called back once more to his former atmosphere of frivolity.

After two weeks at the Château the chevalier felt that he was expected to declare himself. He had promised his uncle to marry; and if he had not loved Mademoiselle de Kerguennec he still would have tried to keep his promise, though he

might have done so while calculating the chances of separating himself virtually from his wife. But he loved the bride he had come to win, and with the new feelings in him, a spirit of diffidence, unknown before, swept over him, and made him nervous before the possibility of a refusal.

‘What a day before me!’ he said to his friend, on the morning he was preparing himself for his interview with the comte. ‘Is it not astonishing that I, the gay and brilliant butterfly, as I used to be called, should have so burnt my wings at the fire of love—and so quickly, too! Ah! De Carnoët, De Carnoët, I would not wish my worst enemy to be in the state of mind I am in. I want to marry and I want to be free; I dread the bondage and worship the chain; I am seized with an all-overpowering desire to run away, or with

an all-mastering longing to worship here all the days of my life. And yet the dread of her refusing me haunts me most, for she is of an independent disposition, and the comte will not thwart the inclinations of his niece. I could die, I could die if it came to this. But you do not pity me, you never did pity me; from the first you pooh-poohed the intensity of my love; and even to-day, when my fate is to be decided, you do not feel for me! You, a friend too—it is hard.’—And the chevalier shook the lace carefully round his neck. ‘That rascal Thurio will never learn how much depends on the appropriate fold of a tie.—You believe in my love, do you not?’

‘Yes, oh yes. It is early yet; only a fortnight, you know.’

‘A fortnight! but what a fortnight when each day is filled with the most

bewildering and conflicting desires, and has the length of a century. I never knew before how much one's happiness can depend on another, and how uncontrollable is the wish to be noble and virtuous near a noble and virtuous woman! De Carnoët, it frightens me at times! Shall I ever be able to satisfy her? Will not her disappointment in me be terrible? But I must make her love me, otherwise I shall be unhappy and wretched for ever.'

De Carnoët looked at his friend's face doubtfully, a smile on his lips.

'Would you be wretched—for ever?'

'Should I? I tell you, you have no fellow-feeling for me! You never had; you are so cold yourself that you will not even understand another who is not. There is little fear of your ever falling in love as I have done; you will be

considering the pros and cons, calculating this chance or that—happy, prudent fellow that you are ! Now I think of it, I have never yet seen you overcome by any woman's charms ; my idea is that you cannot be. Oh, how I envy your indifference ! What would I not give now to change places with you !

‘Change.’

‘No, no, I do not mean it, and in my agitation I hardly know what I say. But there goes the breakfast-bell—Ah ! De Carnoët, what a day, what a day for me ! Wish me good luck, at least.’

‘But what would you consider good luck ; to be refused or to be accepted ?’

‘Accepted, by Heaven ! Refused, I should die.’

‘Or run back to Paris ?’

‘Never, never !’ And the chevalier hastened to the dining-room.

With the kind but incredulous smile on his lips, Rohan de Carnoët followed his friend leisurely. He was amused at the chevalier's moods; and it was very much to him like watching the whims and fancies of an amiable child, though he did not tell himself so and was unconscious of it. He had a sort of fondness for his brilliant friend so unlike himself in almost everything, and he felt glad also of his admiration for Mademoiselle de Kerguennec—glad to see him love her as he thought the whole world should love her; glad she was his first thought and care even as she was his own first thought too—her image never leaving him for one moment night or day.

Yes, it was all as it should be; no woman had he ever met in the world he could compare with her; none so beautiful, none so graceful, none so good. De Trogleff loved her; and his friend loved her. And

anyone coming near her must love her. It would be a charming match ; in his mind's eye he could picture her and his friend walking side by side, and both looking happy and well ; he could fancy his friend chatting away and she listening to his lively talk as he himself could listen, and laughing even as he laughed ; and it was pleasant to him to fancy her amused and happy. No thought of self was there. It was not true that he was too cold ever to love ; but it certainly was true that he had not yet learned to read his own heart aright ; he might have loved at first sight even as his friend had loved, but it was not in his nature to become at once aware of it ; the seed had not only to be sown in his heart, but had to grow before he would believe it had been sown.

On that morning they found Renée as fresh, as cordial, and as simple as

ever. During those days of delightful intercourse swift was the flight of time, and of sorrow there was none. The comte carefully kept from them the news he received from Paris of the bloodshed and massacres ; but, even had they known, their soft laughter might have overcome their dread or sympathy. The three young people were happy, very happy, and it would have been difficult for them to weep long over the distant troubles of unknown people.

The breakfast came to an end, and then the chevalier asked the comte discreetly if he could speak to him. Renée guessed why, and, with open eyes, followed the retreating forms of those two—and of Rohan, driven away from her presence at that moment by some instinct he did not quite make out.

Renée de Kerguennec liked the young

Chevalier de Valvourgs. He was handsome and bright, and she felt sure he was kind-hearted and good, and everything one could desire. She had no objection to marrying him,—for what could she desire better? Her uncle and aunt were satisfied, and why should she not be?

She never asked herself if she loved him. Love was not an analytic study in those days, and a girl in her position was not likely to have heard much about it. No books were there either to tell her of the experiences of others; and, if love came to her, she would have to hug the new feeling to her heart ignorant of what other maidens have found it to be before her.

Had she thought of it,—had she known anything about it, she would have known that she was not in love. It was pleasant to be near such a bright and amusing

companion; and he evidently liked her. There could be no reason, therefore, against their being happy together, if they married. She saw none, and looked for none. Of course they would be happy. And perhaps she was right.

A simple and inexperienced and high-principled girl, provided she meets with a man truly in love with her, is tolerably sure to find love in marriage, and abide by that first and only love to the end of her life. Passion is one thing, love with honour is another; and this last is the only one a good woman craves after. Yes, most likely Mademoiselle de Kerguennec would be happy, if she married the Chevalier de Valvourgs—but she was not in love with him.

During his interview with her uncle, something besides her own welfare occupied her. There was something

in her father's will that she knew must prove trying to the man asking her in marriage; and she felt very tenderly towards the chevalier, to whom she could fancy her uncle explaining it.

The comte received the young man's overtures kindly. He told him of the pleasure it had been to them to make his acquaintance, and that he felt his niece would be made happy by him. If everything, as was usual, had not been quite settled beforehand between the two families, it was because Renée was an orphan and practically independent; it was, moreover, because of a clause in her father's will, and this he would now explain to him.

‘My brother, you see, had some extraordinary notions about the marriage of his only child, and, as they came from his deep affection for her, we can scarcely blame him. At the same time, it is but fair to

ourselves to remark that the semblance of insincerity the clause forces upon us is a trial we should have been thankful to be spared. On his death-bed my brother made me promise him not to name the conditions of his daughter's fortune until after she had been asked in marriage, and these conditions are trying enough to require consideration on your part.'

'My niece can marry when she chooses, but she can have no power over her fortune before she is twenty-one. She has a small income till then, but an income altogether inadequate to the requirements of a married life such as she is bound to by her rank.

'Supposing she accepts you, you will either have to marry her, and wait three years for the very fair fortune she brings, or wait three years before marrying her; unless you are in a position to waive the

question of money altogether till then, because you have enough of your own. The affairs are so settled that no borrowing can be made.

‘ Had it been in my power to make those conditions known to your uncle when you were first mentioned to us, I would have done so ; but my promise to my brother was binding. He saw, no doubt, safety in those conditions for his daughter against a hasty marriage, and thought that twenty-one was early enough for a girl to marry. But my niece feels this arrangement—particularly the concealment exacted from us—very much. Till now she had refused to listen to any proposition of marriage, and would have done so for you had it not been that her grandmother assured us that your uncle would meet any emergency arising from this difficulty.

‘ However, now you know how things

stand, it is for you to consider whether you still are willing to marry my niece or not. At all events, your uncle should be communicated with at once by you, I think. Some of my friends will be glad to receive you while you wait for his answer, and make up your mind.'

The chevalier looked at him anxiously.

'Do you mean to imply that I must leave your roof at once—that I must not tell Mademoiselle de Kerguennec of my feelings towards her? This is terrible!'

'You love her, then?'

'I do love her deeply and sincerely, and the happiness of my whole life is dependent on her answer. My uncle, I know, will overcome all difficulties.'

'Yes; but'—the comte hesitated—'we ought to be sure before. You see, this is one of the difficulties of obeying the commands of men who are no more. My bro-

ther, in his anxiety about his daughter's happiness, does not seem to have contemplated a case of true love with narrow means; his heiress being rich, he feared the fortune-hunter.'

'Yes, yes, I see; but I—I do not care for money—that is, I have, in fact, been much too dependent on my very generous uncle ever to have considered—in short, I have never thought about money matters; I have always had more than enough. My love for Mademoiselle de Kerguennec is sincere, true——'

'Yes, but supposing your uncle objected?'

'But he will not.'

'So my niece's grandmother assured us.'

'I am his heir, his only heir; and he is very rich.'

'I know.'

‘Will you not allow me to speak to mademoiselle?’

The comte thought awhile. Like his brother, he wanted Renée to be loved and to make a happy marriage, and wished that every precaution for ensuring it should be taken. But he saw that the chevalier loved her, and that he seemed everything one could desire. Surely if Renée’s father had still lived he would have removed the difficulty at once. On the whole, the comte thought he might trust the chevalier; moreover he was aware that Renée was able to guide herself in the matter.

‘Will you allow me to speak to her?’ the chevalier repeated.

‘I think perhaps I am justified in allowing you to do so. Speak to her, she knows all about this clause in the will and why it was thought of. It will be easier for both

of you to come to an understanding now that there is nothing to hide.'

To do the young man justice, he had said truly he did not care for money; that is, he did not know the value of money. It never had happened to him to put his hand into his pocket and find it empty, or to see his debts remain unpaid. On his way to his bride-elect, however, his conversation with his uncle, and the way he had calculated the income he would give him, rather troubled him. What if he refused to help him in this unexpected emergency? The very thought brought a flush to his face and increased his longing to make Mademoiselle de Kerguennec love him. Part from her, he said to himself, he could not do.

Renée was standing in the recess of a deep window, and gazing far into the distance. The weather had been stormy

during the night, and now everything lay in soft and undefined outlines under the cloudy sky. A mantle of deep purple clothed the hills far away, while now and then a white, soft light from above broke through the thickness of the clouds, sometimes resting on the top of the trees, sometimes on the church steeple that seemed to shoot out of a bower of verdure; while all the cottages scattered round it lay hid to the view.

Nothing was there to trouble the stillness of the peaceful landscape, and Mademoiselle de Kerguennec's face as she stood thinking reflected the calm of nature. What would the chevalier decide? Would he stay? or would he leave without seeing her? Would the will offend him, or would he try to conquer the obstacles thus put in his way? And what would then be her feelings towards him? Could she

regret him if he gave her up without a struggle?

Then she heard his step, and knew he was coming towards her; and when she saw him standing before her, her smile was even like that break in the clouds, the harbinger of joy. In a moment, seeing her thus, a flood of passionate love passed over him, and he spoke for the first time to her out of the fulness of his heart.

‘Mademoiselle,’ he said, at once coming near her, ‘I have to ask all your indulgence, and all your patience and generosity, for I want of you a boon more precious by far to me than my very life. Do not speak hastily, and pray listen to me to the end, for your verdict will fix my destiny. From the moment I saw you—from the very first moment when I saw you near and heard your voice, I knew that life

without you would be impossible for me. Tell me, can you think of me as a friend—your best, your dearest friend ; one who will watch over your destiny with a jealous care, and whose every thought will be for your happiness? Can you join your destiny to mine?’

He was standing near her ; he felt almost suffocated by his love, and his words came only by snatches ; but although her heart beat quicker, and a flush of pleasure rushed to her face, she answered him with an untroubled calm.

‘ I thank you for the kindness of your feelings towards me, chevalier—but are not there some difficulties——?’

‘ Oh, we will conquer them,’ he broke in, quickly. ‘ Fear not ; were my uncle to see you, he would sacrifice everything rather than take from me the happiness of my life.’

‘Are you sure your happiness depends on me?’

‘Sure! I could not exist without you; as well deprive a man of his eyes when he has just beheld the most enchanting scene, or shut him in prison when all he loves is without. No, I could not exist without you! You are the guiding star beckoning to me, and shining over the whole of my future life. I see your presence like the glory of the morning over every one of my days. With you by my side, I see a path strewn with flowers; I feel the warmth of all the purest delights; the joy of the sweetest pleasures. Under the light of your eyes I can become a nobler man. I feel ready to struggle towards a higher sphere of thought and action. Were you to leave me, were you to disappear from my life, everything must be darkness and desolation, and my future

be wrecked. Do not refuse to tread life by my side, to hold out to me the helping hand of affection, the strengthening look of love. In your presence I loathe my past nothingness, and all great things seem easy when near you. Say, will you not accept me as the companion of your life, for you to help, and to strengthen, and to guide?’

It was sweet, very sweet! This child of the south, with his loveable soul, was very delightful to listen to; could make life appear very enchanting, and she said,

‘I would willingly try; but, while undervaluing your own merits, you exaggerate my powers to help you.’

‘Alas! I have none! none! Only give me some share of your affection in return for my deep love; only promise you will in time try—to love me too.’

‘I will try,’ she replied, a soft blush of

maidenhood on her cheeks. 'It is early yet, is it not?' And the sweet, enchanting smile did away with the pain the words might inflict.

'But you will try? You promise? Say that you promise; say again that you will try to love me, and I am satisfied. Say that you do not reject me.'

'No, I do not reject you, and if you feel sure you care for me—and it is God's will, I hope our union will be blessed.'

In his transport, he knelt on one knee before her, he pressed with delight to his lips the hand held out to him, and then rose to his feet.

'Every year of my life from now I consecrate to you, and for your happiness I will live. Trouble shall never come near you; I will jealously watch over my own treasure.'

He paused, and then went on more quietly. ‘And now tell me, advise me, had I better go to my uncle, or send a messenger to him?’

‘I will tell you what I think, and then you must do as you find best. My uncle and aunt greatly desire to keep me with them; would not your income, joined to my present one, be sufficient for us if we stay? Would you stop here? Is your affection for me great enough to forego all the pleasures of Paris? In three years we could take our place in the world—three years of seclusion and happiness would make us stronger to meet with the difficulties that are inherent to a life at Court. Will you agree to this? I tell you frankly that I should prefer it. The Court frightens me; it seems to me that you will no longer belong to me entirely when there.—You hesitate.’

‘I know not what to say. Is not the bird to leave the nest when it begins to feel its wings?’

‘Wait, then, three years.’

‘No, no! rather any condition than that. Three years! rather death at once. No, I could not wait three years.’

‘Then we must fall back upon your uncle.’

‘And his generosity I answer for. But you will think of me in my absence?’

‘Nay, do not go yourself,’ she murmured, some instinct making her loth to part with this bright sunbeam that embellished life for her; ‘stay with us. You have a trusty and sure servant—send him.’

‘Will the comte allow my staying near you while——’

‘We will ask him.—But I must go now to my aunt and tell her of our happiness. You are a great favourite of hers, and

she will be pleased.' And, lightly leaning her hand on the arm of her accepted lover, she went to the comtesse.

Later on, as Rohan de Carnoët was returning from a visit, he met his friend full of enthusiasm and delight.

'Ah! it is as I thought,' he said. 'You are accepted.'

'De Carnoët, congratulate me; no happier man can exist in this world. I had no idea what love could be. Everything is new for me on earth. I am dazzled, fairly dazzled by my good fortune. I, who was afraid—do you remember how afraid I was, De Carnoët? Such a short time ago, and now—— But you scarcely congratulate me as I thought you would! Is anything the matter? Have you met with any accident?'

'No, I am very glad for you, very glad indeed.'

‘Then why so gloomy?’

‘Am I gloomy? I was not aware.’

‘But you are, you are. I thought you would rejoice in my happiness; you seemed so to wish I should succeed, and now——’

‘Forgive me, De Valvourgs; you perhaps are right, I ought to rejoice more entirely with you; but somehow I feel sad. It cannot be envy or regret, and yet I suppose there is something of both. We do so long for a happiness we seem deprived of, and our heart feels so lonely when there is no sympathy near—I mean, you are so very happy, while I——’

‘Oh, I know, I know; I can understand. It was selfish of me to ask for an unbounded joy like mine. Such a prize! There is none like her upon earth, none like her!’

•

‘None like her!’ murmured De Carnoët to himself, ‘none like her!’

‘And she is mine—mine!’

‘Yes—I congratulate you, De Valvourgs; you will have reason to be proud of your Breton wife.’

And he passed on, while his friend, looking after him, said to himself, with an easy smile of commiseration,

‘Poor fellow! no wonder he feels sad; I should feel just the same in his place; but it is me she loves, or will love—Ah! Renée, my beautiful Renée, what a happy life is before us!’

That night Mademoiselle de Kerguennec appeared in all her beauty. She was full of quiet enjoyment. Her modest assurance, when talking to the chevalier, was very enchanting to see; there was no bashfulness, and no timidity. She

openly held out to him the hand of friendship till she could offer him the hand of love ; never dreaming even if love could ever be necessary. She talked to him frankly about their future plans, taking the lead if need be, and listening with attention when his suggestions came—one they were and one they were to be, and he was bright and handsome—and could plead so well ! She smiled to herself when remembering his words and how easily they flowed ! His heart was no doubt very full when he spoke ;—she could never have said such things. Ah, she would be happy, very happy !

The chevalier, accustomed to the by-play of treacherous love, drank his full at this cup of pure joy. An angel coming down with outstretched wings from heaven and alighting upon earth to make it a heaven for him, was to him scarcely

strong enough a figure to express his new sensations.

And Rohan was there and looked on, uncheered except with the crumbs of politeness her delicacy made her give him that he should not be altogether left aside. He witnessed the chevalier's rapture, looked at her new beauty, and her efforts not to leave him entirely forgotten did not satisfy him. What was it that had come over him? Why was he not able to shake off that feeling of desolation which oppressed him? None like her—no, none like her was there in the world for him,—and she was his friend's!

Surely, surely he was above envy, he told himself. And to envy the chevalier he had now known for years seemed below him. Yes, he was above envy, but he sought for affection—her affection, perhaps—they had lived so intimately of late, and

it had been so very sweet; but he must bid farewell to that pleasant intercourse for the future. He would only be in their way; no one would care for him to be there, and no one would notice his absence. He had better go; better leave them to themselves. And he determined to quit the Château on the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

It is one thing when, with harassed spirits, we promise ourselves to take some great step on the morrow, and another to act towards its accomplishment when the day dawns, and strength and courage are renewed. The next morning, in the sweet sunshine of Mademoiselle de Kerguennec's presence, things assumed a different aspect for Rohan de Carnoët. What was it that had made him sad the day before? The joy of the two lovers? Was it not right they should be happy together, and ought he not to be satisfied with the few efforts

she had made to remember him? Surely he had been unjust! Why should he not bask in the sunshine of her countenance to the last, and rejoice with her in her happiness?—No, he would not go away.

The hesitation that still remained in him was done away with by the comte asking Monsieur and Madame de Carnoët to come to the Château on a visit. The power of decision being taken away from him, he thought he was right to be satisfied and thankful.

To the noise and excitement of the two preceding weeks succeeded calm and quiet; and, with each one at the Château fully aware of the goodwill of the others, the days passed on full of enjoyment and peace.

Meanwhile, the messenger of the chevalier was going through France the bearer of the all important news.

One day as the chevalier was walking

with Renée on the terrace of the Château, and the others were seated a little lower down in the gardens, he asked her suddenly what it was in Monsieur de Carnoët that drew such marked respect from everyone, and she looked up pleased at his question.

‘ You are right, chevalier,’ she said ; ‘ you should know all about the family of your friend ; and I am delighted to tell you. I suppose you guessed that the Carnoëts are poor ? But they are not likely to have told you the cause of their poverty ; Monsieur Rohan is so modest and retiring ;—do you not find him so ?’

‘ Yes, always.’

‘ Now let me see how much history you know ; I mean our own Brittany history ?’

He laughed.

‘ Very little, I fear, except such

fragments as I have picked up lately.'

'Brittany is so far from Provence, is it not?' she replied, looking at him with an amused smile.

'Oh! do not try to exculpate my ignorance,' he replied, in the same tone. 'To tell you the truth, in my knowledge of history I ought to be likened to a man carrying a bag of seeds of which some will bring forth names—some facts, some dates, some places; and who, when he wants a particular part of history, opens his bag and drops some seeds on the ground, and puts together the facts that spring up, in such a place with the dates and names which spring up in another. I always scatter my seeds broadcast, and pick up my knowledge by bits as it springs up; and in that way I know a deal of history—and geography.'

'I am not sure that I understand, but

I gather that in that way you are never at a loss for an answer.'

'Right or wrong there is always an answer ready: history is rather amusing that way.'

'Unfortunately, what I have to tell you is not amusing, but very sad and serious. All our history is more or less so; we are a stern and serious people, though not lacking in poetry and love. Above all, we are great lovers of independence, and to this love of independence do the Carnoëts owe their misfortune—or greatness, as one is pleased to consider it.

'The Carnoëts are an old family, so old that their name is associated with all the exploits of the first Brittany kings; and some of its members are found at every step in the history of the struggle of Brittany against its foreign enemies. Thus

it is that no further back than the early part of this century it happened that the grandfather of your friend was condemned to death as traitor by the infamous Regent of France. ‘Our Parliament, or “États,” was still in existence, though with maimed liberties, when the Regent determined to crush it altogether. Then there was but one cry in Brittany, and noblemen and peasants rose *en masse*.

‘They conspired against the government of France in the woods and among druidical monuments. At Ploërmel the nobility united in the Marquis de L—— my cousin’s château. The room is still in existence. They sang the old lays that had often led their fathers and forefathers to victory, declared their union with France null and void, and proclaimed their entire separation from the country which had violated all the liberties which Louis

XII. had sworn to respect in marrying Anne de Bretagne.

‘Unfortunately, they allied themselves to an ambitious Spaniard, who wanted his king, Philip V. of Spain, to become Regent of France, and this alliance proved their ruin. They were betrayed, and the peasants also, who hated the Spaniards, and who had not been forewarned, were angry when they saw their ships in sight. From that moment the conspirators were lost.

‘The Regent sent into our unfortunate country thirty thousand of those dragoons trained in the Cevennes against the Protestants. They committed the most abominable outrages,—the most brutal murders, and hunted men as beasts of prey. But the noblemen had either fled or were in hiding. Then the Regent promised that, if the chiefs of the conspiracy would give themselves up, he would withdraw the

troops. Three of those brave men came forward, and a fourth was betrayed. The Regent, instead of having them judged by their peers, instituted an informal tribunal, and they were condemned to death at Nantes. Their fortunes were confiscated, their châteaux dismantled, their escutcheons broken into pieces, and their woods and forests cut down six feet off the ground as a mark of dishonour. I will tell you the lament sung about that terrible event, or rather about the death of one of those four men.

‘But Monsieur de Carnoët, who had been prevented by his wife from giving himself up, had escaped so far, and was ready to embark for Spain with one of his friends in a Spanish ship, when he heard cries of distress close by; and, in spite of his friend’s entreaties and the threats of the Spaniards that they would leave him be-

hind, if he did not come at once, he rushed towards the place from which the cries proceeded. There he saw a woman being ill-treated by dragoons, and only consulting his indignation, he fired, and, fighting desperately to the last, died pierced by numberless wounds, but with the comfort of knowing that the victim of the dragoons had escaped. His château was not only demolished, but burnt down to the ground, and his widow and only son left destitute.

‘The French government tried to hold up the names of all those men to execration and dishonour, but the admiration of their own people, who consider them the last heroes of Brittany’s independence, has never failed their descendants ; and I had rather be as poor as your friend and be able to count the noble deed among the many noble ones of my ancestors.’

Renée de Kerguennec's face was aglow with enthusiasm as she related the few particulars of the 'Conspiracy of Cellamare.'

'I will sing the lament of the death of the Marquis of Pontcalec to you, if you like,' she said, softly; and, with her sweet, low voice trembling in her eagerness and excitement, she began :

Eur wer - zeen ne - ve zo sa vet ;
 Trai - tour ! ah ! mal - loz d'id - ta ! War
 mar - kiz Pont - ka - - lek eo gret ;
 Trai - tour ! ah ! mal - loz d'id ! mal - loz d'id !
 Trai - tour ah ! mal - loz d'id ! . . ah !

But, stopping suddenly :

'I forgot you did not understand our

Breton tongue,' she murmured; ' I will give you the burden of the lament, but I will spare you the refrain.

'A new song has been made, made on the Marquis de Pontcalec ;

Those who betrayed him be cursed, be cursed !

Yes ! a new song on the young Marquis de Pontcalec,
so handsome, so full of life, and so noble-
hearted !

He loved the Bretons, for he was born a Breton.

He was born a Breton and was brought up among his
own.

He loved his brethren, but not the town-people, who
all belong to the French party,

Who are always trying to injure those who have
neither fortune nor riches ;

Those who labour night and day to keep their
mothers alive !

He had thought to help us in our misery ;

While they only tried to have him beheaded !

"Seigneur marquis, hide yourself ; that occasion they
have found it !"

He has been lost a long time ; in vain they look for
him ; they cannot find him.

A wretch from the town, who begged for his bread,
is the one who denounced him !

A peasant would never have betrayed him, even if
offered five hundred crowns—

It was the fête of Our Lady of the Harvest ; the
dragoons were out searching :

“ Tell me, dragoons, are you not looking out for the
marquis ? ”

“ We are looking for the marquis ; do you know how
he is dressed ? ”

“ He is dressed like a peasant, blue overcoat with
embroideries, blue waistcoat and leather gaiters,
small straw hat with red lines, on his shoulders
flowing, long black hair ;

“ Leather belt, with two Spanish pistols ;

“ His clothes are of thick stuff, but underneath he
wears golden ones :

“ If you give me three crowns, I will tell you where
to find him ”—

“ We shall not give you three sous, and you will take
us to Pontcalec ! ”

“ Dear dragoons, in God’s name, do not hurt me ;

“ Do not injure me, and I will show you at once
where he is.

“ He is there yonder, in the priest’s house, at table
with the Curé of Lignol.”

“Seigneur marquis, fly ! fly ! Here are the dragoons coming ;

“Here are the dragoons coming with shining arms and red coats.”

“I cannot believe that a dragoon would dare to touch me,

“I cannot think the fashion should have come for a dragoon to lay hands on a marquis.”

“He had barely finished speaking when the dragoons filled the room, and he seized his pistols.

“If anyone comes near, I fire,” he cried.

Seeing this, the old Curé fell at the feet of the Marquis.

“In God’s name and your Saviour’s, do not fire, my dear seigneur !”

At that name of our Saviour, who has suffered so patiently,

At that name of our Saviour, his tears flowed in spite of himself ;

His teeth were clenched, his head low against his breast ;

But, looking up, he said, “I will go.”—

As he crossed the parish of Lignol the poor peasants said,

They said, the inhabitants of Lignol : “It is a sin thus to bind the marquis.”

As he passed near Bernée, arrived a troop of children.

“Good-morning, good-morning, Monsieur le Marquis, we are going to catechism?”

“Farewell, my good little ones, I shall see you no more.”

“But where are you going, seigneur? will you not return soon?”

“I do not know, only God knows; little ones, I am in danger.”

He wanted to caress them, but both his hands were chained.

Hard would be the heart that could not have been moved;—even the dragoons wept.

And yet men of war have hard hearts in their breasts.

When he arrived at Nantes he was judged and condemned;

Condemned not by his peers, but by footmen fallen from behind their masters’ carriages.

They asked Pontcalec, “Seigneur marquis, what was it you did?”

“I did my duty, follow your trade!”

I cry, my children, for a thing that will make you cry too.

He is dead, poor people, he who fed you and clothed and helped you,

He is dead, he who loved you, inhabitants of
Bernée;

He is dead, he who loved his country, and who
loved it unto death !

He died at twenty-two, and as martyrs and holy
men die !

O God ! have mercy upon his soul. The seigneur
is dead; and my voice dies.

Curses ! curses on thy head, thou who didst betray
him !

Curses—curses——!’

As Renée de Kerguennec ended the
lament, which gave so true a picture of her
country and manners, a deep sigh, almost a
sob, burst from her lips.

‘Brittany, my poor Brittany!’ she ex-
claimed. Then, looking up at the chevalier
half timidly, she added, ‘Forgive me if
I seem to forget myself; I love my people,
I am proud of our heroes and feel for
them. But we will say no more on this
subject; and, now that you know better

who your friend Rohan is, I feel sure you will care for him none the less.'

'No, indeed, no, indeed,' replied the chevalier, quickly; 'I am thankful to you, believe me, thankful for anything that can make me feel with you.'

At that moment Rohan himself joined them. The traces of emotion were yet on Renée's face, and his eyes met hers still wet with tears, and for one moment she stood facing him, as if undecided.

How was it those two had not joined hands before, and that their hearts were still silent. Perhaps it is that the Breton is slow to receive new impressions, or more likely that the truth was still unknown to both. They were friends, had always been friends, they could feel for one another, and perfectly understood each other. It was so natural it should be so; were they not both Bretons, and, like the unfortunate De

Pontcalec, had they not been brought up among their own people, till the convent opened for her education and the Court for his.

And now they had met again, but a stranger had come between them with his proposal of marriage, a stranger they both liked, and who seemed too bright ever to be the cause of trouble or sorrow to anyone.

Renée soon recovered, and with her wonted smile said to the young men :

‘ I will leave you now. You promised to accompany me to the recteur to-day, remember ;’ and she was gone.

‘ De Valvourgs ! what does this mean ?’ Rohan exclaimed, as soon as she was out of hearing. ‘ Tears ! What can have happened ? Mademoiselle de Kerguennec in sorrow ? Tell me, I entreat you, what is the matter.’

‘ Nothing, nothing, believe me, De Car-

noët. She has only been telling me who the friend is I have cared for so long now. She has told me of Brittany ; of the fate of your grandfather ; and has sung the “ Death of Pontcalec.” ’

‘ Ah ! she has not forgotten ! We used to sing it together once as children, a long, long time back, as it seems to me now ; and she has not forgotten.’

‘ De Carnoët,’ the chevalier went on, holding out his hand impulsively, ‘ I am glad to know of your grandfather, proud to be known by a grandson of his ; I trust we shall for ever remain friends, and that nothing will come to separate us.’

‘ No one could desire it more than I do,’ replied Rohan. ‘ Your friend I am and will remain.’

CHAPTER VI.

THE day did not pass, however, under the gentle influence of the poetry of great deeds. In the afternoon a servant came to announce the visit of Monsieur de Trogloff, and they all knew that the comte would have a difficult moment with him.

The chevalier looked at Renée, and said, in a low, loving voice :

‘You are mine—mine ! He comes too late now ?’

‘Too late,’ she replied, with a smile, ‘though it seems that he came a year ago, poor man.’

‘Do you pity him?’

‘Do you not pity all those who have to bear with pain?’

‘But that man, that man!’

But she laughed, little knowing the intense hatred existing between the two men.’

Ydeuc de Trogloff stood haughtily before the comte.

‘Comte, tell me if it is the truth that Mademoiselle de Kerguennec is to be betrothed to the Chevalier de Valvourgs?’

‘It is possible she will be.’

‘Possible! possible! Then will you explain the words you used a year ago when I came to ask you for her hand?’

‘I told you that my niece refused to hear anything about marriage before she was twenty-one.’

‘But now she is only eighteen?’

‘She is only eighteen.’

‘I wait for your explanation, comte.’

‘ You have a right to it. Her grandmother who lives near Paris was so anxious she should make the acquaintance of the chevalier that she yielded ; and—and has accepted him as a bridegroom that is to be.’

‘ But, comte, I judge I have a right to speak to Mademoiselle de Kerguennec. She ought to have been told of my having asked her in marriage before the chevalier came. She ought to have given me an answer. You had no right to dispose of her hand before speaking to me. You were bound to let me know of the chevalier’s intentions. I consider I have been most unjustly treated. On my word of honour, I will not thus tamely submit, I will not bow submissively before such a decision ! Mademoiselle de Kerguennec must hear me ; she will understand that you were bound

to speak to her of my proposals. Never, comte, never shall I forget this. I find no excuse for what you have done, no excuse for this gratuitous insult offered to me. I had been willing to wait till Mademoiselle de Kerguennec could hear me; I relied on you to let me know if she ever changed her mind. I would have waited till she was twenty-one; but to treat me thus, to put me aside—spurn me like an unworthy cur! I will not bear it, I will not bear it. I demand that Mademoiselle de Kerguennec should hear me, hear me even now, though it may be too late. I demand that she should judge between you and me, comte, between you and me——’

‘She will, sir, as soon as you can govern yourself; as soon as I am able to make you understand that my niece was told of your having asked her in marriage——’

‘ Ah ! she was told ? and—and——’

‘ And—she did not see that—that she could accept.’

‘ Is that the truth ?’ he exclaimed, furious.

The comte smiled.

‘ My dear sir, were it not that we all know your fiery temper, I would not, believe me, put up with your way of speaking to me. You should have known that I would act honourably by you, and by all men ; you would have heard from us of my niece’s engagement. However, nothing is settled yet——’

‘ Nothing settled ! Do you say that nothing is yet settled ?’

‘ Nothing. That is, we are waiting for a letter from Provence which will decide my niece’s future destiny.’

‘ I must speak to Mademoiselle de Kerguennec, comte, you have no right to

forbid me. I must tell her of my loving her, of my waiting for her, she must know——’

‘Is it quite necessary she should, do you think, after she has refused you——?’

‘Then I ought to have known it, and not to have been kept waiting.’

‘No one kept you waiting, you were free to do as you chose; no binding words were there between you and me——’

‘But now, now you say all is not concluded? I must see her, I must; you cannot refuse me.’

‘My niece is in her own home and perfectly free;—you forget this. I have no power to prevent her from seeing you. Her father put her under my charge, and that charge I have tried to fulfil to the best of my knowledge for her good, but I have no right to sway her mind one way or the other. If you persist, I will tell her

of your wish, and let her do as she thinks best.'

'I certainly do insist on my right of speaking to her.'

'Very well ! Wait here, I will go to her myself and explain the object of your visit.'

'Please to do so.' Monsieur de Trogloff waved his hand impatiently, and, walking up and down the room, waited for the young girl to appear.

She soon came in ; gentle, unaffected, and amiable as ever.

'You wish to see me, Monsieur de Trogloff.'

He looked at her, and she saw him tremble in the effort he made to conquer himself. He could not speak. The sight of the beautiful, calm girl before him sent through his brain a new longing for her he had thought of with love ; and

it was the chevalier who had won the prize—the chevalier, a Provençal! He mastered himself at last.

‘Yes, I wanted to see you, mademoiselle; I come to you for redress. I have waited a whole year before speaking to you; until you were twenty-one, the age before which the comte told me you would not allow any-one to speak to you of marriage, I would not force you to hear of my loving you. But I hear now that—that another has spoken, that another has—has been listened to, while I waited left in ignorance of your change of mind on the subject; and I who would have waited for ever for your condescending to hear me, I am told that—that——’

She interrupted him :

‘I am most sorry, monsieur; had I known that you were waiting for any decision from me, I would have let you know. But I was only told of your kind feelings towards

me, after my grand-mother's letter about Monsieur le Chevalier de Valvourgs had reached us. You must forgive me, but I did not feel that—that a union between us could—a woman, you see, has her fancies—while justly admiring you for your great qualities, my heart did not prompt me to—to——You must forgive me,' she repeated, 'and we must remain friends; I should be grieved if it were not to be so. We shall remain friends, shall we not?' and she took a few steps towards him and held out her hand to him.

He took her hand and carried it to his lips.

'I—love you. Your happiness would have been my greatest care—I waited to speak to you—I hoped that you would listen to me in time. I deeply regret now I listened to the comte; I ought to have spoken openly to you. I——'

‘I entreat you do not distress us and yourself with a trouble that could not be avoided. Marriages are written in Heaven, you know, and ours was not determined there—and it could not have taken place. You must comfort yourself. Do not such things happen continually in this world? But we part friends. It will always be a pleasure to see each other, will it not? It will always be a pleasure for me to see you.’

‘Ah! I shall never, never comfort myself, mademoiselle, for this—misunderstanding. Had I spoken to you before—before the chevalier came——’

‘My uncle told me, before he came, of your wish to marry me, so that his presence has really nothing to do with my decision. I seem cruel, I feel it, but I cannot help speaking simply to you. It is all so easily explained. I do trust you

will be comforted in time. I assure you it will add greatly to my happiness to know it. I feel as if I had been so unkind towards you, and yet—yet, how could I help it? Suppose you were told of a young lady in love with you, and you did not think your dispositions would agree, what would you do?’

‘Do? do?—— Ah! the more I see you—the more I regret——’

‘Nay, nay; and you will come——’

‘Never! I never could see you again—never, never! I must leave you, I am heart-broken; but—but I shall remember who it is that——’

‘What is it you mean?’

‘Oh! nothing, nothing. Farewell, farewell. There are things a man cannot forgive;’ and Monsieur de Trogloff left the uncle and niece together.

‘Who is it he is threatening, uncle?’

‘My dear child, who but me.’

‘You ! Threatening you !’

‘But he will forget, when his fit of anger is over.’

‘Will he forget ?’

And her uncle, who well understood what De Trogloff meant, merely said,

‘I feel sure of it.’

CHAPTER VII.

‘THE messenger, the messenger Thurio has returned.’ The words were heard and repeated by everyone, though nobody knew who had uttered them first.

‘Where is he? Bring him here,’ cried the chevalier, rushing out to meet him.

‘What news, Thurio?’

‘Bad! bad! Monsieur le Chevalier.’

‘Bad?’

‘I would not undertake such a journey again, even for my dear master’s sake; you meet nothing but cut-throats and executioners and——’

‘But the letter—the answer?’

‘It is all right, it is all right, Monsieur le Chevalier. I hid it. Ah! Monsieur le Chevalier, it is well for a servant to risk his life, but what is the use of losing it, if by so doing he fails to serve his master? I knew what importance you set on the answer.—A matter of life and death it is, I make sure,—I said to myself, remembering your words and ways when sending me to your uncle on that perilous journey——’

‘But the answer, man. What keeps you chattering there instead of giving me my uncle’s answer?’

‘Well, Monsieur le Chevalier, as I said, I have it safe; but only because I dressed myself like them—like a common fellow; do you not notice my dress, Monsieur le Chevalier? I am no longer the courier of Monsieur le Chevalier, but a trader, a

simple trader, and I made sure of the letter in a safe place; and now I can die in peace. Ah! You would not be astonished at my speaking as I do of death and fear of death if you had seen the people murdered in the streets as I have, only because they had called themselves comte or marquis. For there seem to be no more dukes nor marquises, nor any noblemen left in France, nothing but honest *citoyens*—when they can be honest.’

‘Look here, Thurio, give me the letter immediately, and I will listen to you afterwards. Now come, I do not want to get angry with you, for I know that you are a faithful servant.’

‘Angry! Faithful! Monsieur le Chevalier,’ grunted the man, half good-humouredly, looking down towards his boots. ‘I thank my stars that I am a faithful servant, and also that I was a saddler once,

an apprentice-saddler, Monsieur le Chevalier, for I always had a fancy for horses, but that saddler's business has saved my life and your letter, Monsieur le Chevalier !' And, taking off one of his boots, he began carefully to cut the stitches towards the top, so as not to injure the boot nor the lining inside, and going on talking, boot in hand. 'Twenty times was I asked to stand and deliver, Monsieur le Chevalier, but I would deliver nothing—"Take all I possess," I cried, "but I am a nobody like you, and you will find nothing upon me; you may turn everything inside out, and search everywhere." There, Monsieur le Chevalier, it is peeping out, and very tempting it looks; but I must not cut that bit of leather carelessly—that bit of leather held my very life, or the stitches did, which is the same thing, is it not, Monsieur le Chevalier? Ah! a few have gone through

the letter, but better so than a sword through your servant's body, Monsieur le Chevalier—or your letter, such as it is, would not be here.'

'Oh, Thurio, how long will you try my patience?'

'Ah, but, Monsieur le Chevalier, you should have seen people like you being run after in the streets as I did! "*Canaille!*" I could almost have cried. "What is it you are doing against your betters, *canaille?*" would I have said to them, but for that bit of shoe-leather so neatly stitched! What was the use of stitching it so carefully, if I lost my head.—There! I deliver the message into your hands, Monsieur le Chevalier. It is rather soiled and discoloured, for it was not fair weather always. But there it is, and right glad am I!—And please let the people know here what I have done; tell

them how I deserve their praise. The servants must have some consideration for me, must they not?’

‘Tell them yourself, Thurio, I fancy you can speak for yourself a little. But there, tell them from me that your master is highly pleased with you. And now, comte, this letter—ah! it is as I thought, all kindness. Mademoiselle, Comte, De Carnoët—all of you come and hear what a delightful and good-natured old uncle mine is. It is all settled. Read the letter aloud, please, Comte; we are all friends here.’

And the comte read:

‘MY DEAR NEPHEW,

‘I am more than delighted to find that you are so truly happy! It reads like a dream from fairy-land to hear of love, peace, and beauty! We manage to do without all those things now-a-days

here, and the world is not a bit the pleasanter for it! I may as well tell you now that I knew *Mademoiselle de Kerguennec* to be beautiful; only I thought you would be glad, under the circumstances, to find it out for yourself. In my opinion, a wife should be a delight to look upon; otherwise I do not understand the happiness of a married man. True, they say that love is blind, which is very comforting, but I have failed to find in the world that friends are blind also; and we must expect sooner or later through their kindness to recover the use of sight.—But I am no judge in such matters! No doubt if I had met with a *Mademoiselle de Kerguennec*, I should have married; for who could resist the charms you describe with such enthusiasm. As it is, I did not, and therefore are you my heir! Whether this is to be regretted or not, you are the best judge.

‘Now let us see about this money business, for it is most just that young people should care to live, as well as old and crusty bachelors like me. I have followed the advice of several friends, and have sent all my available money out of France, as I have no wish for these good folk to get it. You will therefore receive this year thirty or forty thousand francs from England through our lawyer—if he remains an honest man, which I believe he will. This I suppose will be enough for the present, for I should advise you strongly to remain where you are. Indeed, you have no choice, for the king is really nothing else than a close prisoner, and I feel sure you do not approve of this gathering of noblemen out of the kingdom. How different it might have been if, instead of waiting to ask the help of our enemies, we *gentilshommes* of France had rallied round the throne from

the very first. But it is difficult to know now what to do for the best. However, as I said before, I see no other course open to you but to enjoy your happiness to the full in that most safe and quiet of places—Brittany.

‘Thurio declares he is able to take this letter to you without being beheaded or hung, drawn, or quartered twenty times on his way—otherwise, I should not have risked your life and mine by sending such an epistle. I know we can trust him and his expedients; but he would not tell me what he meant to do, for fear I should betray him under torture! But, thank heaven, there is no torture in our time to add to the horrors of the people’s doings; the work is quick and effective, and one does not mind that so very much.

‘I must ask you, my dear nephew, to excuse my mentioning anything so dismal

in a letter of congratulation ; unfortunately it is difficult to escape contagion when you are in the thick of the disease, and we speak of nothing else but of our own woes here. So forgive this part of my letter.

‘ My compliments to Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse, though such things as noblemen are no more to be, by the sacred will of the people of France ! And, as to my future niece, tell her that the thought of being able to see her great goodness and beauty some day, will embellish every moment of my life, and that she has my warmest wishes for her happiness.

‘ Your affectionate uncle,

‘ LOUIS.’

Thus the answer that had been so long coming was as good as it could be, and

everyone was made happy by it at Kerguennec ; yet in the evening, as the young men were going to separate for the night, the chevalier said to his friend,

‘ De Carnoët, tell me what you think of my uncle’s letter ?’

‘ It is a most kind one.’

‘ Nothing else ?’

‘ What is it you mean ?’

‘ Well, do you know, I have never heard my uncle speak, or ever seen him write so sadly. Does it not strike you as if he were either ill, or very much distressed ? It is strange, De Carnoët, but it positively spoils my happiness. I feel as if I ought to be near him either to revive his spirits or help him out of his difficulties, whatever these may be. How hard it is for us here to understand all that is going on in France ! I wish,—I almost wish I could be affianced to mademoiselle at once,

even sooner than the comte proposes, and then go and see him.'

'You would not leave her?'

'Only for a few days, or a week or two at the utmost. I could manage, I daresay, just as well as Thurio.'

'But—but think, De Valvourgs ; it would be—it must be—sorrow for her ; it must be anxiety. I believe even your uncle would blame you. How strange that, having reached such a height of happiness, you should think of endangering it. How I should prize every moment near her, if I were in your place. But you do not really mean to go?'

'No, when one comes to speak of it, I am afraid I must not go. But yes, it is as I tell you ; something or other prevents me from giving myself up wholly to my good fortune. What is it? a presentiment, or what?'

‘ You love your uncle and feel that he is sad, that is all. But everyone almost, except us, in this far-away place, De Valvourgs, is feeling sad in France, and even for those *émigrés* who have gone to Germany or England, it must be terrible, I should say. We are most fortunate; let us be thankful, De Valvourgs, and I entreat you, in whatever you wish to do, remember her first.’

‘ Yes, yes, but for her I would go to him, for he has been a father to me; I have known of no other. But you are right, how can I think of leaving her now? Though, as Thurio has returned very quickly, I might—but no—I will not think of it; good-night—good-night. No: I could not bear to leave her now, I could not. Good-night, good-night.’ And they parted.

Once in his room, Rohan de Carnoët felt

in no way disposed to rest. The day had brought him strange feelings of uneasiness. This friendly intercourse with the inhabitants of Kerguennec had been charming. They had lived together more like the members of one family since his father and mother had joined them. It had seemed so natural to reciprocate a thousand little cares and attentions, and to bring his own share to the common fund of good-temper and pleasantness. All had been joy. Every day had brought fresh simple and pure pleasure, and everything had contributed to the general happiness. The weather had been exceptionally fine; the evenings, spent mostly in the woods, had been clear and calm; the atmosphere laden with the scent of flowers. 'A dream of fairy-land,' Rohan de Carnoët repeated to himself when alone.

Yet, though they had all longed for

that letter to come, though the letter was as satisfactory as it could be, something there was that had brought an unwelcome change. When it was decided that the *fiançailles* for various reasons should take place as early as possible, Renée de Kerguennec had suddenly turned pale and they had all been glad at last to separate. Now, the chevalier was thinking of his uncle before thinking of the bride he had just secured. As for himself, the unsatisfied longing of once before had returned, and was stronger than ever. Though sure now that Mademoiselle de Kerguennec had never forgotten the friendship of their younger days, he wanted to leave her—to be far away from her. He was almost vexed with her for having for one moment looked so pale, and certainly much annoyed with the chevalier for not considering her enough, and for

daring to think of leaving her so soon.

He paced up and down his room till the night was far advanced. Tired out, he at last sat down in his arm-chair, and, closing his eyes, a feeling of sleep came over him.

In a moment he found himself alone in the woods, on the seat Mademoiselle de Kerguennec was most fond of; a strong scent of pine-trees was upon him, the soft murmur of the running brook lulled his senses in soft forgetfulness—and then she appeared to him, with the same beautiful face, the same enchanting smile, the same white dress she usually wore on those warm days; and, as she approached him, she laid her hand on his shoulder, and her eyes were lost in his, her face touched his,—and he started up wide awake.

He lifted his hand to his forehead like a man suddenly struck with a horrible fear; his eyes acquired a strange fixed-

ness, as if arrested by some dreaded sight. Then, by a strong effort of will, he laughed out—

‘Nay, nay, these creatures of the brain are but the offsprings of habit and of sleep. We live surrounded by people and things, and the mind, getting accustomed to rest on what surrounds us, carries the image before us, when drowsiness falls on our senses. It may be a sound, it may be a perfume, a flower; it may be a picture, it may be a living creature—a woman——. We are such creatures of habit, that even in sleep we cling to what is near. We would that people did not pass away, that things should remain for ever the same; then would we willingly live for ever—— That is all—that is all—an absence, a new tune, a new face, new impulses, and the present drives away the past—and the past may have been

pleasant, may have been sad, but—it is the past, and it cannot be recalled! So this day—this night—this dream—are already things of the past, never again to revive the same intensity of life—things of the past—things of the past.’

And Rohan de Carnoët went to rest to look for strength for the morrow.

The betrothal, the comte thought, had better take place at once, and everyone seemed naturally to come to the same conclusion. What the reasons were for such haste none could have told. Some near relations of Mademoiselle de Kerguennec were invited; and, a few days after the receipt of the letter, there was a new gathering of friends at Kerguennec.

The impression of sadness the letter of his uncle had first left in the chevalier’s mind passed away. He was elated and

brilliant; only regretting that it should be his *fiançailles* they were preparing instead of his wedding. His perfect happiness was contagious. The whole household, even down to the servants, felt it.

Thurio seemed as excited as his master, boasting loudly that his apprenticeship to the saddler had saved not only his own life but that of his master and his bride, and everyone else concerned. The chevalier indulged his fancy, and liberally rewarded his having so cleverly saved his own neck from the wiles of a whole nation set on the watch to catch him.

The comtesse and Madame de Carnoët rejoiced in the happiness of the girl they loved so much; they were certain that her union with the chevalier would prove a source of blessing. Meanwhile, the ceremony of the betrothal would be gone through, and would give more liberty to

the young people—and be a security in those days of change and trouble.

Mademoiselle de Kerguennec herself seemed satisfied. After that first moment of maidenly fear, she had yielded herself entirely to the joy of the chevalier, and was looking forward to contributing to his happiness all the days of her life.

Rohan de Carnoët stood aloof. Modest and retiring they knew him to be, and no wonder was expressed at his absence.

So the day came when the two young people were to promise that they accepted each other as husband and wife, and would be faithful to their troth.

The curé was there, and during the dinner there was not a jarring note, not a discordant element, to check the flow of good-will and satisfaction that prevailed.

After dinner the guests retired to the drawing-room—made brilliant with flowers.

The Prayer-book and the two rings that were to be exchanged were on the table near the curé; and an expectant silence fell on everyone waiting for the *fiancée* to appear. At last she came leaning on her uncle's arm. She was extremely pale but exquisitely beautiful.

The chevalier felt as if he could fall on his knees before her; his voice and hand trembled as he came towards her, and, seeing him there, she smiled a smile of affection and encouragement. Thus, pleased with each other, they prayed God to bless their *fiançailles*; and having received, lowly kneeling, the blessing of the priest, they rose and exchanged rings.

The young people felt this was the beginning of a union to be binding for life. Kind feelings and kind words filled the rest of the time, and both the chevalier and Renée, in this atmosphere of love, looked

forward to love and peace and happiness in the future.

No thought of sorrow could find place in their hearts—no anxiety for the morrow; it was sweet to love, and sweet to live. Alas! at that very moment hatred and revenge were raging uncontrolled in France.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE curé had left, but he had asked the young people, and as many of the elder ones as could come, to join them that night in the service of the midnight mass which was to be held in boats on the open sea. He thought it would end the day in a befitting manner, he had said, if they were to come and praise God for His blessings along with their poorer and less fortunate brethren ; and they all looked forward with pleasure to their evening. A boat was to be in readiness for them at an appointed place ; but as discretion was above all

things needful, and they must see that they were not followed, there was just enough in the adventure to make it exciting.

It did not occur to them that they might be doing wrong in going to pray with the priest they honoured, though he was exercising his ministry in secret; they never thought of the hardship this secrecy entailed upon the poor villagers, who held their ceremonies of baptism and marriage and even of death either in the night or in secluded places.—Poor humble believers who were going through the trial of their faith as thousands had done before them in the world,—and who were obliged to worship, in fear of seeing the beloved priest who ministered to their spiritual wants carried off to prison and to death!

Renée and her uncle and the two young men were just thinking of getting ready

for the walk, when there was suddenly heard outside the door a strange and unusual commotion; and a servant in great trepidation announced the visit of the mayor of the next town. Two soldiers accompanied him. These remained outside the door, but the mayor, dressed in plain clothes, and with the *tricolore* scarf round his body as a sign of his office, advanced towards the middle of the room within hearing of those assembled there.

‘Citoyen Kerguennec,’ he said, ‘please excuse this visit, which no doubt surprises you. But, first of all, let me tell you that you have nothing to fear from it; I come here simply prompted by my great respect for you, and by my anxiety to keep the peace. You cannot be ignorant of what is taking place on your estate; how the *citoyen* curé defies all authority, for he not only refuses to acknowledge

the existing government, but in spite of the decree issued against him continues to exercise his ministry. I am grieved to say that I have now orders to arrest him; and you know that once in prison there is little hope of escape. To-morrow a new curé will come, and what happened once before cannot happen again. The first curé appointed to replace him had to go because he always found his church empty, and the people gone at his approach; now, however, if the villagers show the same opposition, my duty will be to employ force to make them respect the curé. I entreat you, therefore, to use your power or authority over the *citoyen* curé, for him not to incite his people to revolt. Till now we have been spared all those scenes of bloodshed, and I would do anything for the people under my jurisdiction to be so spared to

the last. May I reckon on your help, *citoyen*?’

‘Your visit honours you, sir,’ replied the comte, with great politeness, ‘but I am afraid I have no power over Monsieur le Curé; he feels himself bound by his duty to remain by his flock.’

‘He feels himself bound to rebellion and obstinacy through selfishness,’ replied the mayor, quickly. ‘The disturbers of peace should be chastised; and it is a pity it should be one of those bound by their calling to speak of peace who is the cause of discord. But I am commanded to meet rebellion by force; and, *citoyen*, although I do not care to make use of threats in this altogether conciliatory visit, let me advise you to be careful how you show hospitality to a man almost under the sentence of death; let me advise you not to abet the *citoyen* curé in his dis-

obedience to the law. We have been spared so far, I repeat; and I believe it is in our power to be spared to the last. Ask him to go away and to leave us; we shall then have peace.'

'I am sorry that I cannot agree with you in this; their priest gone, the villagers would resist still, I fear.'

'Then so much the worse for the villagers, and for all concerned. I have done a thing outside my office entirely; I am running the risk of being censured or even dismissed for it, but I was determined to try to keep the peace in our country places if possible, determined to try every means and to ask for your aid; but I can do no more. Whatever happens in future, remember that you have been forewarned. *Citoyens, citoyennes*, I wish you good-day.'

'Stay one moment, sir, and allow me to

thank you warmly for your well-meant visit, and to tell you that I appreciate it fully. I will do my utmost to secure peace, believe me ; and whatever happens you may be sure that I am of one mind with you in wishing to avoid the disgraceful scenes of disorder and bloodshed that have taken place so often elsewhere. Again I thank you, sir.' And the comte bowed courteously to the mayor, whose face flushed with a pleasure he was bound to hide. Then, muttering more words of salutation, he left.

A strange sensation of dismay fell on the party at the Château. The comtesse, who was near Renée, seized her in her arms convulsively, crying,

‘ Oh ! what a visit of ill-omen at such a moment !’

‘ Dearest,’ said the comte, soothingly, ‘ why seek trouble where it is not ? This

relates entirely to a different matter, and has nothing to do with us.'

'But his threats!'

'Do not attach too much importance to them. Why should evil come to us because it has come to others? there is no such law in the world; on the contrary, some rejoice while others weep; there are even some who profit by the weeping of others. But let us see in what we can help this worthy man who seems better than his fellows. Moreover, he is right; I wish we could persuade Monsieur Brevelaye to go.'

'He must be persuaded to go,' said Monsieur de Carnoët; 'but I fear our peasants will not take it kindly, and his brother will be a terrible fellow to convince. But, indeed, it is the best thing for him to do; he is sure to be caught sooner or later; while we can look after him when he is abroad, and send

him supplies till these troubles are past. Are you going to the service, comte?’

‘No, I will not seem to—abet Monsieur Brevelaye’s disobedience, as the man has it. There is nothing lost by prudence.’

‘But we can go, can we not?’ asked Renée.

‘Still bent upon pleasure!’ said the uncle, playfully touching her cheek.

‘No, not quite that; but we might speak to the villagers on our return and advise them to be quiet. Could we not?’ she ended, looking up for approval at the chevalier.

‘Certainly, I think mademoiselle is right; the more we show ourselves ready to submit to them, the easier they will find it.’

‘You think your example of some importance? Well, well, perhaps you are right, only be prudent, be prudent.’

‘Dear uncle, are not love and youth always allied to prudence?’

The uncle laughed, as Renée meant he should.

‘Anyhow, there can perhaps be no harm done to-night by your joining the service; the new curé only comes to-morrow, and till then there is no danger for Monsieur Brevelaye. But remember he told you he thought there were spies set to watch him; see that you are not followed, if you can help it.’

‘We will be very careful, never fear, and now let us go. I must first go and get ready. It is a pity to take off the betrothal dress so soon, is it not?’ she remarked laughingly to the chevalier.

‘You will all the sooner put on the bridal one, I hope,’ he replied, in the same tone. And the younger members of the party started off chatting cheerfully; and,

strange to say, not about the charms and loveliness of their surroundings, but about Paris, that treacherous beacon set on high, where so many a young man from the province had become forgetful of the sweet and simple joys of home; Paris, with its Court and its King and beautiful Queen. How delightful to meet there again after all the present troubles were over. It would enhance every pleasure for the two young men to have to introduce Renée to the world they knew so well! They would be two to guard over her, two to be jealous of her happiness, two whose first thought and care she would be!

And she laughed and thanked them.

And the chevalier related his first announcement to Rohan of his future marriage—told his *fiancée* how he had dreaded to see her; how he had felt the presence of

his friend to be a tower of strength on his way to her ; and how Rohan had not found out in the girl of eleven whether the woman of eighteen would be beautiful or ugly !

And so they walked on, well pleased with themselves, well pleased with one another, and soon arrived at the village buried in peace.

How difficult to realise that there might soon be war there ! Poor peasants, they did not go out of their way to fight, and were peaceful enough if left alone ! Why should there always be some element of discord coming from Paris to disturb them ? From time immemorial it had been so ; and at last they had almost always been obliged to yield—at least of late. If there was a new struggle it would end again in the same way ; and all sorts of sorrow would come upon them.

So thought Renée on reaching the first

cottages ; and she became serious, promising herself to do her utmost to help them through. They went through the village, passed the pretty church which looked sadly forlorn and desolate. No urchin was ever seen now playing on its steps ; no beggar leaning against its wall. This refuge of the poor and lonely was forsaken as if stricken by the plague. For more than six months now it had been shut ; and the bells, always so dear to the Breton heart, had been silent. For the curé appointed by the Republic had found nobody to ring them for him ; when he had done it himself, the peasants had taken it as a signal to avoid the church ; and he had been reduced to say the mass alone, and at last had left in despair. They certainly had a will of their own, those poor peasants, and were not to be carelessly trifled with !

Soon they reached a house a little apart from the rest, though just the same as the others, with its low thatched roof and small windows, and the chevalier found himself for the first time within a Breton cottage, and looked around him with much interest.

It was composed of but one large room, at one end of which about a dozen cows were sheltered for the night. Only a low door and a manger separated this part of the habitation from the rest.

Ranged along the walls were the *lits clos*,—deep cupboards up to the ceiling, with three or four or more broad shelves, on which the bedding was laid; each shelf having its own sliding-doors of walnut, carved with open patterns, to admit a little air.

The cattle was under the master's eye during the night, and so were the sons

and daughters, and the servants of the farm; who undressed and dressed each in the compartment assigned.

The dark carved doors, the large cupboards, also of sculptured walnut, with their highly-polished brass fittings, which contained all the wardrobe and the goods and chattels of the family, gave a look of luxury to the room, in spite of cattle, earthen floor, and narrow windows.

On one side of the wide, open fireplace was a wooden construction—a high-backed arm-chair for the oldest of the family, who among these people of patriarchal customs and manners receives the greatest marks of respect and reverence. On the other side was a bench for the invited guest or the pauper. In the middle of the room was a table, with a large, round, dark rye loaf, covered up with a spotless, coarse white cloth; and a pitcher

of cider. This was the hospitality offered to any new comer. From the thick and blackened rafters hung herbs, onions, hemp, seeds, tools, or anything that could hold there. Above the huge chimney a strange-looking leather ball was seen, and an old gun. Over the hearth was an iron pot containing the soup for the members of the family on their return.

At that time of night the flies were at rest; the smell from the cows was not over offensive; and when an old man—a bed-ridden invalid—pushed back one of the carved doors of his bed, and his white head was seen resting on a clean pillow, the chevalier thought the room in no way repulsive.

Mademoiselle de Kerguennec sat on the *bahut*, or oak coffer close to the bed—used by those who had to climb to the upper shelves

to sleep ; and there she talked to the old man, while the flickering resin light stuck in the large chimney shed a kind of halo round the face of the beautiful girl.

‘ Juan, we are a little late, I fear : are all the others gone ? ’

‘ They are gone, mam’zelle, but will return for you as far as creek Henbon, if you will go there. ’

‘ And you are pretty well, Juan ? ’

‘ Just the same, by the will of God. ’

‘ Not troubled in your mind by all the bad news from Paris ? ’

The invalid looked sharply at the chevalier, hesitating ; and Renée, noticing it, laughed.

‘ Why, Juan, this is my *fiancé*, the Chevalier de Valvourgs. We went through the ceremony to-day ; won’t you wish me good luck ? ’

‘ Ah ! mam’zelle, ah ! mam’zelle, good

luck!—it is not that which one would wish to you, but all happiness and God's blessing, mam'zelle. Monsieur le Chevalier, I am pleased to see you.'

The old man's speech rather took aback the young chevalier, who answered that he also was pleased to make his acquaintance. But Renée was determined to speak to Juan of what was uppermost in her mind.

'Juan, are you aware that the second curé is coming to-morrow to replace your son? Is Monsieur le Curé very much put out, do you think?'

'My son will do God's will, which is to stay by his flock, whatever the wicked devise.'

'But, if he went away for a short time, would it not be safer? He would return to us when all these troubles are over.'

‘He who has put his hand to the plough should not look back.’

‘You mistake, Juan, your son could not call it “looking back.” It would be great sorrow to him, no doubt, but there would be no dread of fighting and killing.’

‘Martyrs there have been always in the church of our blessed Lord ; if he is called to martyrdom, we will go to him in Heaven, where he will pray for us.—But the men must be waiting for you at the creek, and time is short ; it will very soon be twelve o’clock, and you must not make our holy priest wait for you.’

‘Well, we will go, Juan, but I wish you could see the matter as we do at the Château, and raise your voice against what will cause blood-shedding ; God does not approve of that, you know. To-morrow soldiers are coming with the new

curé. What may not happen in such a conflict ?’

‘Soldiers ! soldiers !—Ah, Monsieur de Carnoët, your grandfather, knew what they were, those soldiers of the French king, but—but the soldiers of Christ have more power than any of these.’

‘I am sorry, Juan, that you do not consider it better to yield to the storm: many good men have done so. But good-bye, we will not keep Monsieur le Curé waiting. Good-bye, Juan.’

‘Is this Monsieur Brevelaye’s father?’ asked the chevalier when they were outside.

‘Yes.’

‘He seems a fine old man, but very determined. Will all the others be as obstinate? There is but little hope of peace, if so.’

The chevalier is right,—indeed there is not! What does the law-maker in Paris know of the longings and spiritual

wants of the Breton peasants? That humble priest, born among them, whose language and thoughts they understand, whose virtues they know, is to be replaced by an alien to the soil! They are to be parted from their adviser, their comforter, their friend, the only one they can go to in trouble and at every step in life:—from him who has opened to them the Christian world and who will at their death open to them the gates of Heaven! But their life of toil and sad privation is but a longing for Heaven, for without the hope of everlasting rest it would be difficult, almost impossible for them to exist!

And their priest who knows their longings, who has the same aspirations, whose life is one long renunciation and earth but a stepping-stone to Paradise, he will not leave his flock and look after his

own life and comfort here below. He is of the stuff that martyrs are made of,—with but one object in life: to gain Heaven through much tribulation and even through death! With that one object in view, that one hope, everything else fails in interest; persecution is welcome, for it adds to the list of his merits—it forces the expected reward; it is as a promise from on high that he is thought worthy; it brings Heaven nearer! Death only could be more welcome; but he will not court death, and this will be accounted to him among the number of his good deeds!

The care of his body is in his brother Loïk's keeping. Loïk worships his brother, and has an almost feminine tenderness for him; his brother is a man of God and does not think of providing himself with the necessities of life; and he—Loïk—is un-

worthy to sit and talk with him, but cooks his meals, if need be, and makes his bed. His mother spins the flax and makes the linen for both her sons, but that of the curé is always the finer. The old father, who has worked so hard and has lost his health in order to make him a priest, always asks him for his blessing; and Loïk, who cleans his boots, kneels down before him and worships and says his beads. His brother looks to heaven; he looks to his brother, and with the two there is the same absorbed look that prevents men from seeing the trifles of life, and makes them go straight to the end before them.—

The three young people had become thoughtful, and walked the rest of the way more or less in silence. They reached the creek, however, and felt sure nobody had been watching them.

They found awaiting them with a fishing-boat, rowers who put off from the little bay that had sheltered them.

The sea was calm and beautiful, and the moon, now and then veiled by light summer clouds, shed a mild soft light on the waves. The farther they got from the shore, the larger the number of boats they saw emerge all along the coast from the tall cliffs—gliding in silence towards the open sea and avoiding that path of silvery water which danced under the moon's rays. Soon in the perfect silence of the night, only broken by the noise of the oars, was heard a distant silver bell, and every bark rowed towards the place from which the sound came. One large boat, all alone, was there in the distance, and, as soon as it was perceived, the eyes of the crowd of men, women, and children in the

other boats, were all directed towards it. They remained at a respectful distance and formed a semicircular group round it ; then the boat advanced towards the centre and stopped, and in the midst of the silence, broken only by the gentle murmur of the waves that came rippling up against the keels of the boats, a man's voice rose strong and solemn :

‘ Dominus vobiscum ! ’

And the kneeling crowd responded :

‘ Et cum spiritu tuo ! ’

And the curé, clothed in his white surplice and embroidered stole, the golden threads of which now and then glittered like the twinkling light of a star, began to say mass to the serious and attentive crowd, whose murmured responses lost themselves on the moving waters.

And, when the silver bell announced the

elevation of the consecrated host, the crowd prostrated themselves and wept aloud, for their shepherd was an outcast, and the consolations of religion they could only get by stealth.

At last the mass was concluded, and the priest's voice borne above the waves pronounced the blessing on the people. Then his sermon began. Alas! the burden of it was this: Forgiveness of sins to those who persevered in the path they had already chosen, but eternal damnation and reprobation if they accepted the new priest's teaching; if they allowed themselves to be seduced into assisting at his mass, into believing in the sanctity of his ceremonies, or even into selling him the necessities of life. Baptism and marriage, through him—he, their true priest, declared null and void and even criminal. No, they had their choice: Damnation for

all eternity, or everlasting bliss. He would be faithful; let them be faithful too, even unto death.

The ceremony was over, and the boat containing the curé speedily disappeared with the help of its strong oarsmen. Then the people who had been on their knees rose up, and suddenly a powerful voice started the *Canticle of Hell*, in which all joined before separating and going back to their homes. This canticle Renée and Rohan de Carnoët knew well, and awful it sounded borne away in the silence of the waters. It runs thus:

‘Let us all descend into hell, Christians! and see what a horrible punishment those condemned souls which God’s justice holds enchained in the midst of flames, suffer for having abused His goodness in this world.

‘Hell is a deep abyss full of darkness into which even the smallest streak of light never penetrates.

‘Its gates have been closed and locked by God

Himself, and He will never open them—the key is lost.

‘The hottest furnace here below is but as smoke in comparison with hell-fire,—a fire which is always burning the condemned souls.

‘It would be far better to be burning in a furnace until the end of the world than to be tormented for a short hour in hell !

‘As maddened dogs they cry, and know not where to flee.

‘Flames everywhere, over their heads, under their feet; flames on all sides which burn for ever without consuming!

‘After having been left for some time in the flames, they will be plunged by Satan into an icy lake, and from the icy lake into the flames; from the flames into the water again, as a bar of iron in the forge.

‘Then will they cry, and call out bitterly:

‘“Have pity, O God, have pity on us!”’

‘But it will be in vain that they cry, for so long as God exists, so long will their torments and sufferings endure.’*

* From the ‘Barzaz Breiz,’ translated into French by Monsieur de la Villemarqué.

An hour afterwards, as Renée, the chevalier and Rohan were once more at the Château, thankful to be all together again, the comte asked:

‘And were you successful in advising our people, children? Did they listen to your voice?’

‘Uncle,’ said Renée, softly, looking up to him with her wonted attitude when in earnest, her two hands folded low before her, her face grave and thoughtful, ‘uncle, tell me again that God is a merciful God.’

‘Dearest, what is it? you look sad and harassed.’

‘I feel a pain there,’ she murmured, putting her hand to her heart, ‘a pain and a great fear. Oh, that we could save those we love from fear and sorrow and pain! Oh, that we could be sure of their eternal bliss! Then slipping down on her knees, and hiding her face on her aunt’s

shoulder, 'I would give my life this moment, every hour of my happiness for you all—you I love, every one of you !'

And she burst into tears.

'Renée, my darling ! This day of emotions has been too much for you. Come, love, come with me and rest. Child ! God is ever merciful towards those that love him.'

And the comtesse, raising her niece sobbing in her arms, tried to soothe her overwrought imagination and feelings ;—the weak comforting the strong. And the young girl felt this, and, making a great effort to recover herself, smiled bravely through her tears.

'Forgive me,' she said, 'I am afraid I forgot myself—a great wave of sorrow rushed over my heart and overwhelmed me for a moment. Perhaps,' she added, looking up lovingly at her *fiancé*, 'perhaps

it is that we had been so happy all day, and the contrast, when brought into contact with the stern side of life, was so great. You all forgive me?’

Her uncle, taking her two hands in his and kissing her forehead, said cheerfully to her :

‘ Child, at your age there should be none of those faintings of the soul ; life is full of promises of joy for you ; and our joy, the joy of those who, like us, have lived beyond their youth, is to share their child’s joy. Do not allow your sad thoughts to rob us of our dearest delight.’

She pressed his hands gratefully in hers, and murmured :

‘ You are good and kind like the dear father I have lost !’ And tears of gratitude seemed ready to follow ; but a courageous smile chased them away. ‘ You are right ; whenever I feel sad I will think

of you all; and, thanking God for so much love, how can I but be happy and joyful?’

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day was splendid, and in the early morning everything lay bathed in a golden haze of light. Certainly, if men had set apart this day for trouble and fighting, nature was not in sympathy with them, for the greatest calm pervaded sea, and earth, and sky.—How often in our life have we reproached nature for being careless of our pains and unsympathetic, and yet how many a time has sorrow been lightened and failing strength renewed under the influence of a beautiful sky; how many a time has the refreshing breeze

inspired the trembling with courage ; how many a time has a glorious sunset lifted up our souls, even beyond the lost joys we grieve over, to a boundless hope in the unknown !

We would have nature weep when we weep,—but there are so many who then are rejoicing ! Rather let us all agree that a beautiful day is a delight man at all times ought to prize and be grateful for.

The inhabitants of Kerguennec met together with happy looks of hope and resolution ; each rejoicing in the morning's gladness, and meeting with welcome greetings from the others.

The four gentlemen, all animated with the same desire for peace, determined to go out early to see the villagers ; persuasion and example would surely bear fruit. Renée wanted to go also, wanted to ride out with them ; the freshness of the day

urged her on to activity, and her affection for them all prompted her not to part from them. But there was her aunt, looking so delicate, though with a smile of satisfaction on her lips at seeing her niece herself again,—her aunt, always so glad to have her near; so she conquered the longing, arranged the cushions for her on the easy-chair, caressed her, and spoke soothingly to her. The chevalier knew, and so did Rohan, how she longed to be on horseback with them, but her self-denial was precious to them, even dearer than their own pleasure at having her with them.

The comte determined to find out the curé's brother, for he felt that in him was centred all the obstinacy and rebellion which animated the rest. Loïk once made sure of, there was no hope of resistance left for the others. But Loïk was nowhere to be found.

Although the comte was loved, the villagers knew that he had advised their curé to leave them, and they were angry. They knew now that, if he wanted to see Loïk, it would be to try to dissuade him from the course they had finally adopted; therefore was Loïk nowhere to be found. The curé was also in hiding. The comte went to Juan Brevelaye, their father, but there he was met with the same arguments that his niece had met with the evening before.

‘So you will not tell me where either of your sons are?’ he asked him, on going away.

‘I am not one to interfere with the ways and will of the man of God,’ he replied.

At that moment a stir was heard from one of the beds, and Loïk himself appeared.

‘Loïk! you were here all the time?’
exclaimed the comte.

‘I have been sleeping, master.’

The comte looked at him; his eyes were wonderfully bright for a man just out of sleep.

‘Then you have not heard what I said to your father?’

‘May be I have, and may be I have not, master; you and yours in times past have not always preached submission to us poor people.’

‘As far as I am personally concerned, I never had any occasion to ask you to fight, nor to resist the authority set over us. As to the past, we seigneurs of the land struggled for our interests, and for yours, so mixed with ours. But I see no good that can come of resistance now; we have not the means.’

Loïk looked at him in a half cunning way, and said :

‘ Union is strength, master.’

‘ Union ! What can you mean ? Union with whom ?’

What did this common villager mean to imply ? Was he also in communication with the *gentilshommes* who had emigrated and who were now trying to find allies in France ? He himself had been asked to help ; asked if he could raise troops supposing England lent her help, so that the *émigrés* could land in Brittany and find themselves at the head of an army. But he had not given a second thought to the matter ; he desired neither to emigrate nor to fight, but to avoid all kind of disorder if possible. Had Loïk heard from those abroad ? he asked himself. So he repeated :

‘ Union—with whom ? Union between

us cannot be, I had rather leave France than fight.'

'So others have done before you, master, and may be they are sorry they did so. The peasant now is forsaken by those he used to help. But even so can the peasant resist.'

'This is folly, Loïk; you will bring upon us a mass of reckless soldiers, and all the miseries civil war entails. Better remain quiet.'

'Yes, after we have obtained what we want, we will.'

'And that is?'

'Not much: to be left alone with our noble count, and our holy priest. And if we are victorious they will have to leave us alone.'

'If you are victorious! Are you then all this time organizing war, war against your own brethren of France, and that too

without arms, without ammunition, without chief?’

‘If our natural chiefs leave us, we must even find some among ourselves! But may be, all will not be like you. May be, some will be found.’

‘And deeply wrong would they be who, with eyes opened to what must be the end of such a struggle, dare to encourage you to begin it.’

‘But may be, more than ourselves will fight.’

‘I cannot understand you; speak plainly and let me know what it is you are doing.’

‘Master, you are no longer our friend; I will not betray those who are.’

The comte looked at him.

‘Are you the only peasants going to resist?’

‘That will be as the Lord wills,’ replied the other.

‘Tell me the truth, Loïk ;—are you, or are you not planning anything with your friends of the other villages?’

‘Would you lead us if we are?’

‘No ! I will not ; I have said it ; I had rather leave France as others have done than undertake such murderous and useless work.’

‘Leave France, master, for you it will perhaps be better.’

‘Where is your brother?’

‘That is not my secret, and I have no right to tell. Some there are who, without strong castles like yours, have offered their persecuted priest shelter ; but you, master, you neither shelter our persecuted priest, nor will you help us to save him from death. That is not as it should be ; that is

not as it used to be of old between the seigneur, the peasant, and the Lord's anointed.'

The comte had not thought of offering any refuge to Monsieur Brevelaye, knowing how well he could depend on his brother and on the love of his parishioners; but the reproach of Loïk made him feel that perhaps he had been remiss. He certainly knew of the danger of sheltering the priests who had not taken the oath to the Republic; but fear was not in his nature. He could have hesitated to do it for the sake of his wife and his niece; but these he could send away. Having suddenly got the matter clearly before his mind, he said :

'If I offered him refuge, would you submit?'

Loïk looked at him awhile, then at his father, and replied :

'Master, I thank you. You might

run some danger yourself in doing so.'

'I know it—as much danger even as your brother—yet I offer him refuge if you will relinquish your plans of resistance.'

'Thank you, master, thank you ; nobody need know of my brother's retreat, and your life need not be endangered, but I am glad of the leave you give me. You will not be angry now to hear that there are certain old places in the ruins of the Château where he can hide without coming in contact with you.' And Loïk looked at the comte with his stern, cunning look.

'How long have you been thinking of this?' asked the comte.

'Does not master know of the passage to the sea and the "Threshold of Death" ?'

The comte started.

'Do you know of that passage?'

'Truly, master, your father and mine

played in it many a time. What do you say, father?’

‘Ay! ay! and many a time in the room that shakes with the blows of the waves, and no wonder, no wonder it shakes!’

‘Is your brother there now?’

‘He was there yesterday; he is wanted elsewhere now.’

An angry frown came on the comte’s face.

‘You scarcely had a right to come thus to my place,’ he said, coldly.

‘The hunted hare will rush to any hole he thinks safe,’ replied Loïk.

‘Have you the secret of the door, then?’ the comte asked, unwilling to show his own ignorance of it.

‘I have.’

‘And have you used it?’

‘It can be used as a way of escape; for

the waves have withdrawn some way below the cave. It is a perfectly safe place for hiding.'

The comte thought a while, and then said,

'Will you do what I ask you, cease to resist the decrees sent against your priest, if I offer him a frank hospitality till he can go abroad? I am willing to run this risk of death myself, if you accept my conditions.'

'Master——'

'You hesitate. Is not the risking of my life, and, possibly, of all dear to me, enough to satisfy you?'

'Master, you are truly kind, but—but it is too late.'

'Too late for what?'

'The villagers of another parish have risen.'

'Which village? What will they do?'

‘I am not at liberty to say.’

‘Then you have detained me here all this time to keep me away from the others,’ said the comte, angrily. ‘Take care I do not punish you for this.’

‘If our master will not lead us, we will even lead ourselves,’ stubbornly replied Loïk. ‘We will be our own masters, and fight without our betters.’

‘And soon turn against them, no doubt,’ exclaimed the comte, still in anger.

‘Never! unless they first turn against us.’

‘You are not a Republican, Loïk, and would be angry, if I called you one; yet you have all the independence of the Republicans; and also their forgetfulness of what is due to those above them.’

‘Monsieur le Comte, we would die for you—one and all die for you, as we hope

to prove.—“Our God, our Priest, and our Seigneur,” is our motto.’

The comte left the cottage angry and irresolute. At the door he found the Chevalier de Valvourgs, whom he had left there with Rohan de Carnoët, to wait for him. The chevalier told him that Rohan had heard of something going on in the next parish, and had gone there. They set spurs to their horses, and galloped away.

The comte knew now that a rising was certain ; that perhaps there was fighting at that very moment, and he regretted that his wife and niece were still at Kerguennec. This was the first moment of fear he had really experienced as yet. To all the horrors going on in France he had as it were shut his eyes, believing it best to remain quiet and silent ; but now danger

was encompassing him even in his own home. Unconsciously he had sheltered the disturber of their peace, for, if it was true that spies were about the village, it all depended now on their discovering the priest's retreat, for the quiet life at the Château to be at an end. He determined at once to send his wife and niece away, for the Marquis de L—— had asked them already to come to his place, where all was as yet quiet, thanks to the priest there having emigrated, and to the *prêtre assermenté* who had taken his place being satisfied with the very few people he called his flock.

They had gone some distance when they heard the report of fire-arms, and hurried forward. Soon from a high plateau they saw what was going on—a hand to hand fight between soldiers and peasants. The

peasants, armed with pitchfork, scythe, or *pen-bac'h*,* had rushed on the soldiers who, unable now to fire, were using the butt ends of their guns. To the surprise of the comte, both the Marquis de L—— and Rohan de Carnoët seemed mixed up in the fight.

They rushed on and reached the fighting parties just as the officer was calling out in a rage to Rohan,

‘Who are you, thus to have interfered?’

‘You are our prisoner,’ replied Rohan, calmly, ‘and I need not answer you unless I like. But my name you shall hear; it is Rohan de Carnoët.’

‘Ah! a traitor’s name,’ the officer exclaimed.

‘The name of a hero, a true hero,’ replied Rohan quickly, raising his hat in

* Stick with a heavy knob at the end.

reverence of the dead. All the peasants clustered round him, and, raising their hats as he had done, of a common accord cried out,

‘A hero! a Breton! Long live Monsieur de Carnoët our chief! Long live Monsieur de Carnoët!’

‘Take all these men’s guns away,’ said Rohan, ‘and let them go.’

‘But, master——’

‘What? What have you to say?’

‘Would it not be better to—clear the earth of them?’

‘No, no. By heaven, no! Let them go!—Ah, comte, you here too?’

‘What are you doing? What has happened?’

‘Comte—marquis—comte,’ growled the soldiers. ‘Ah! ah! We have fought in France against the nobles, and thought they

were all dead or gone ; and here they grow as thick as berries on a bush.'

'Wait a while,' replied another, 'wait a while, we shall have our turn yet.'

All the guns having passed from the soldiers' to the peasants' hands, Rohan said,

'Now go, and, believe me, leave us in peace in future.'

'We will see,' the officer murmured.

'Give them something to eat or drink, before they go,' said the comte, 'there are many wounded among them.'

'There are some wounded among ours,' replied Rohan, 'and a few dead, I fear. You who are too bad to go back may stop behind : we will take care of you,' he added, speaking to the soldiers.

Some had serious wounds and could scarcely stand, but their companions determined to help them on as well as

they could, and not to leave them behind. The two priests who were with them, pale and faint and dreadfully excited, refused to stay. The peasants looked darkly after them and said among themselves that they were only so many vipers who ought to have been crushed to death.

The comte and his companions went further on to where the battle had begun, and found two dead bodies—a soldier and a peasant—and two or three men besides, badly wounded. They were removed to their homes, while the remaining peasants came round Rohan again and said :

‘Master, we will keep these guns for our own defence.’

‘You won them ; they are yours, but beware how you use them. Now you have brought the anger of the *Bleus* upon us, we scarcely know what to expect.’

‘Master,’ an old man cried, ‘as long as they have brave gentlemen like you at their head the *gars* will be brave too and win.’

And the others went on :

‘We are yours for ever ; for ever now ! You have saved us all ; we will fight under your orders when you will. We are only too thankful to be under you, Monsieur de Carnoët.’

All this was said without tumult, but with the stern determination of men resolved to risk everything they held dear.

‘You mistake my position, my good friends,’ Rohan replied, ‘you know that it was a mere chance my being here at that moment, and that I was not at your head at all.’

‘But you are now, master ; you cannot go back now ; you must side with us.’

‘I will neither side with you nor with them. I do not want to have anything to do with such outbreaks; it was fortunate for you I came, since it gave you courage, but beyond that, I have done nothing to deserve your approval and occupy such a post as you would give me. Understand me, I do not wish to mix up in any of those matters. Now good-bye, friends, we will laugh some day over this fight, I have no doubt; but for the present it is very serious.’

‘Good-bye, master, you may say you refuse to be our captain, but we know better; we know that when we are in danger we shall find you ready. That’s how we understand your “good-bye,” Monsieur de Carnoët.’

‘You make a great mistake, a great mistake! I cannot say too often that I will not fight at your head nor anywhere

else. But now go and take care of your poor wounded comrades.'

The peasants said no more, but, stopping where they were, looked at the four gentlemen riding slowly away.

'We shall know where to find him,' they said comfortably to each other, 'we shall know, and he will come. Is he not a Carnoët?'

Meanwhile the comte was pressing Rohan to tell him what had taken place.

'While I am using all my influence to bring peaceful ideas about, I find you fighting; what can have made you do such a thing?'

Rohan smiled sadly and said,

'I am glad the marquis was with me; he will tell you how my peaceful notions were all scattered in a moment to the winds. I expect, comte, you would have done the same. As I rushed on here after

having been told that this parish would not accept their new priest, and were resolved to fight, I heard great cries and a good deal of firing, and from the hill I saw the peasants giving way, and felt they would be massacred to the last man. You know, comte, it is hard at such a moment to calculate consequences. The two groups were distinct ;—they were to me like the past and present world brought face to face. In an instant I found myself at the head of the running away villagers. I can scarcely understand it now,’ he went on quietly. ‘I galloped down the hill towards the soldiers, and the villagers turned and followed my horse and rushed on the *Bleus*, and before they had had time to fire again, the peasants were upon them, fighting as surely men never fought before. It was rather a tough battle, for the soldiers are all trained men. But

you saw the end—we had just finished as you came. Some of your tenants were countenancing and helping the others.'

'And you had no arms yourself?'

'Oh, dear no, only this!' and he cut the air with his riding-whip. 'I don't think I touched anybody even with this, but I daresay I looked like some great soldier brandishing his sword,' he added, laughing.

'And you, De L——, you did not fight either, did you?' asked the comte, gravely.

'No, I looked on; there was no call for me to do so; they all managed very well and quickly enough, I can tell you. Rohan was quite a hero.'

Strong men will always enjoy a fair fight, and it was amusing no doubt to think of those peasants without guns putting to flight soldiers in uniform,

and well armed ; particularly as the right was decidedly on the side of the peasants, according to the view of the matter held by the *gentilshommes*.'

But still the comte looked very thoughtful.

'We shall have trouble,' he said.

'But why fear, comte? I have no doubt we can hold our own against some scores of soldiers at a time ; and they will never send more about such a paltry business. I believe the government will leave us quiet now.'

'My dear Rohan, the villagers are right, you have become their chief, whatever you may say to the contrary ;—you are so in heart now, and they are cunning enough to see it, and they rely on you.'

'You invited me, marquis, to Ploërmel, will you have me still? If so, I will go at once, and show the comte and all my

dear friends_yonder that I will not allow myself to get entangled in their broils.'

'Yes, you had better come to Ploërmel, for we are quiet there now, at all events. I should advise you all to come, and leave those obstinate people to their fate.'

'No,' replied the comte, 'I do not think that would be right. I will stop behind; but, if you will take the comtesse and Renée, I shall be glad.'

'Very well, that is settled; the household of Kerguennec shall sleep this week at Ploërmel. Let us hope, comte, you will not miss us too much.'

'I shall miss you very much; but I will join you as soon as I feel sure there is no more mischief on foot here.'

'But,' exclaimed De Valvourgs, 'what shall we tell the ladies—that we bring back a victorious general; or shall we say nothing?'

‘It would come out piece-meal,’ replied the comte. ‘You will be the first to tell Renée about it;—better have it all out at once, and enjoy the comic part of our position as long as we can. The tragic will not delay, I fear.’

So it was agreed that nothing should be kept from those at home, but Rohan grew serious in proportion as De Valvourgs grew elated at the prospect of having such a thing to relate.

‘Don’t you think, comte, after all, that it might frighten the comtesse?’ he remarked. ‘Would it not be better to say nothing?’

‘My dear Rohan, your warlike looks would betray you.’

As they talked, and went on slowly and leisurely, they reached the village of Kerguennec some time after the fight had taken place, but, to their surprise, found

every man, woman, and child out of doors, expecting them, and they were greeted with cries of:—

‘Good-morning, good-morning, Monsieur de Carnoët; good-morning, Monsieur de Carnoët!’

‘Good-morning, good people,’ he replied. ‘You are all looking terribly idle; what is the matter with you?’

But he soon knew that the adventure was already all over the place, and that his passage through the village was to be an ovation.

‘You may have to pay dearly for this,’ said the comte.

‘Never fear, all will blow over, and my glory be soon forgotten, believe me.’

‘Rohan, I consider you so compromised now that I see nothing for you in case of war but to leave the country or to fight.’

‘I will fight then.’

‘And we all started a few hours back with the intention of forcing the peasants to be quiet,’ said the comte, sadly. ‘We have indeed kept to our plan.’

As they approached the Château, they met the curé and his brother. The gentlemen raised their hats, and were going to pass on without speaking when the curé stopped them.

‘Monsieur Rohan,’ he said, ‘allow me to thank you most earnestly for the help you gave those men, who would perhaps have perished to the last man but for you. God will reward you. We know now that some among you gentlemen feel for us.’

‘Don’t take it so seriously, Monsieur le Curé; I saw a fight and I rushed to the rescue of the weakest; perhaps if it had been the *Bleus* I might have helped them.’

‘That—never!’ said the curé, calm and unmoved. ‘Your name is that of a Breton gentleman.’

‘Well, I have heard plenty about my name to-day; but all I mean is that I did not purposely go to the rescue, and that you owe me no thanks—neither you nor anybody else. Good-morning, Monsieur le Curé.’

‘Good-morning, sir,’ answered the other, more gravely still.

On reaching the *cour-d’honneur* they saw Renée watching anxiously for them.

‘Not much use to try to hide your grand doings, De Carnoët; they know all about them at the Château,’ said De Valvourgs.

And they did. Renée came quickly to them with outstretched hands.

‘Tell me, tell me, Monsieur Rohan, what it is you have done?’

‘Covered himself with glory,’ replied De Valvourgs.

Then they went to the drawing-room and heard that Monsieur Brevelaye had just related everything.

‘How very indiscreet of him,’ exclaimed the chevalier. ‘But he was not there, nor was his brother, and they can scarcely know the truth like eye-witnesses would. Therefore I pray you listen to me.’

‘But neither were you an eye-witness,’ the others exclaimed. ‘So you also are unable to tell the truth.’

Thus, half in laughter and half seriously, the event of the morning was related. It was not mentioned that there were at least two men dead, and that blood had flowed freely, for they were determined to make light of the matter. Yet in one bosom, at least, they could not still the

fears such an event gave rise to. That Rohan had behaved and would always behave like a hero, Renée de Kerguennec felt sure; but who could tell if this was not the prelude of many other such struggles? Who could say what the end would be?

‘Tell me frankly, was there nobody wounded? Not one man? Tell me the truth!’ she added, affecting to laugh, and threatening him with her finger.

‘There were two or three wounded.’

‘Any dead?’

‘Why should you care to know? It can do no good.’

‘Only that I like to know things exactly. You can tell me the truth; you were an eye-witness, were you not?’ and she smiled as she looked at him.

‘It will trouble you, I fear, to know that there may be one or two.’

‘One or two dead? No more? Are you quite sure?’

‘No, I believe not.’

‘Thank you,’ she said, and all her affected gaiety was gone; though she tried hard to hide her feelings from him.

‘Do you blame me for having helped our poor peasants?’ he asked.

‘Blame you! You know I would have done the same, although I am but a woman.’

‘And they would have obeyed you, as their forefathers obeyed another brave woman once.’

‘Then, why do you speak slightly of what you did this morning? There cannot be two measures; if you were not brave this morning, neither could I be,’ she added, with her quiet smile.

‘But it is the duty of man to fight, and lead to fight.’

‘And the duty of woman to look on, you will add.’

‘So the world would say.’

‘And so we do, we poor things born to submit and to obey! But, Monsieur Rohan, tell me, is it really true that you do not mean to mix in such matters?’

‘Perfectly true. I have not the slightest intention of becoming a knight-errant, seeking to redress the wrongs of the world.’

She looked at him, and then said, gravely :

‘If what my uncle fears happens; if our people unite and fight against the government, I suppose we shall see dreadful things. What will our place be in such a case? What ought we to do? Tell me what your ideas are?’

And Rohan, unconscious of the perfect confidence that existed between them, and

thinking it was only because they were both Bretons that their thoughts ran in the same channel, replied simply :

‘I cannot help thinking of it, and wondering what we ought to do. But, to tell you the truth, what happened this morning, took me by surprise. No one was less prepared to lead men to fight than I was when I left you, and yet I find myself now in a position which may influence my whole life.’

‘But you say, you will not fight—will not lead our peasants to fight?’

‘Would you wish me to do so ; and do you think it would be right?’

‘I—I do not know what is right or wrong in such a case, except—except that, if we saw those poor people being butchered by soldiers, I think we could not remain idle.’

‘No, we could not remain idle. It is

what happened to me this morning. So I suppose we must leave it to the future to decide what my duty is.'

'I fear it must be so. But, if there is fighting, I feel sure you will be there in spite of all you say.'

'So everyone seems to think,' said Rohan, gravely enough now.

'You believe it yourself, you see. Oh! it is hard to have trouble brought to one so, is it not, when one has done nothing to deserve it? I shall not have a moment's peace now, if there is any sign of the struggle going on.'

'But why should you trouble so about it? The chevalier is not a Breton, and has nothing to do with our domestic troubles; he will remain by you.'

'Yes,' she replied, thoughtfully, 'unless he prefers joining you also, and—and who knows? Two men killed to-day, do you

say? Is it not a dreadful thing to think of losing thus suddenly those we love! It is strange, but I have grown fearful since the last few hours. We heard so much about those murders in Paris and yet I felt unmoved, while to-day, because of a small struggle—I suppose it was because of my knowing some of those concerned in it—I feel so very sorry for the poor people. Yes, I fancy that you would be found with them if—if—— Well, I must not think of this any more. Let us have some music, I fear I am going to be as foolish as I was last night!—Your dear mother, just try to fancy her sorrow and grief!—But no, no, I must not go on thinking of such things.—Ah, chevalier,’ she said, going towards her *fiancé*, who had just appeared, ‘we are going to sing; will you come?’

‘Certainly. Where you are, there shall men find me always, I trust.’

And so Renée played and sang, and the day passed happily at the Château. Yet in the evening alone in her room she threw herself down on her knees and once more repeated to herself,

‘I would die—I would die willingly for them all. Lord, grant there may be no more blood shed in our peaceful land, no war, no death—no death of those we love.’

CHAPTER X.

‘AT my seat near Ploërmel, if you come with me, you will be at peace. No one will molest you there. The authorities cannot help mixing you up with this affair, seeing the Carnoëts are now residing with you; but you will take away all occasion of offence by removing at once from the scene of the affray.’

‘I believe you are right,’ the comte replied.

For himself, personally, he had little fear, but, devotedly attached to his invalid wife, he dreaded anything that might endanger

her peace. So, having once accepted the invitation of the Marquis de L—— for her, he was easily prevailed upon to accompany her, and having gone through the task of hiding their more precious treasures, as every noble house was obliged to do in those days of license and of rage against the rich, the whole party went to Ploërmel.

The distance was serious enough for the comtesse, and many were the halts made. They had passed Scaër and were nearing Josselin when they were arrested by the most unexpected sight.

An immense concourse of people were pressing forward to a given point, and the dreary solitudes of the *Landes* were being animated by thousands of human beings. The *bombarde** and the *bignou*† were heard above the talking and

* A kind of clarionet. † Small bag-pipes.

noise of these many men, women, and children. All were in holiday attire, and dressed according to their particular *pays*, or parish ; Léon and Tréguier, Vannes and Cornouaille, and many other places were represented by their different costumes.

The women, with their snowy white caps of all shapes and sizes, first attracted attention. Almost all wore the open bodice with embroidered and lace chemisettes underneath ; to this some added an immense white collar wonderfully plaited, and falling low on the shoulders. The scarlet dresses worn by many contrasted with the deep black ones trimmed with black velvet, and with wide, open sleeves worn by others. The whole costume of the latter was nun-like in appearance, even to the hood. All the marriageable girls had their skirts trimmed with thick silver or gold braid, each row representing so much

money a year—their marriage-portion. One and all had thick gold crosses round their necks.

Gorgeous and striking was the sight, for the men's costumes were in keeping with those of the women. Most of them wore a large wideawake, like the *sombrero* of the Spaniards, with a woollen or velvet cord of many colours twisted round and round the crown. Others had smaller hats, similarly trimmed round the crown and bordered with black velvet, but with the ends, also of velvet, hanging behind—much like those on our children's hats. All had long, flowing hair.

Some had long square coats like those worn by the older noblemen at Court, but with three rows on each side down to the waist, of brilliant and closely sewn buttons. Underneath was the deep black velvet waistcoat. Others wore

the round coat and the thick white woollen waistcoat falling below the hips and richly embroidered; this also was adorned with buttons. All wore the wide Gaelic breeches held up by a belt with an ornamental clasp, or by a brilliant red or blue sash four or five yards long wound round and round the waist. Ornamental gaiters and shoes with buckles, completed these most picturesque costumes.

It was a motley crowd and glorious, as it hurried through narrow roads deep and low between strongly built embankments of beaten earth crowned by huge hedges—those future fortresses against the Republicans that were so soon to invade the country—or flocked within the fields along the small paths close to the hedges.

‘They are going to the *Soule*,’ exclaimed

the marquis, joyfully. ‘I had forgotten it, chevalier ; you come at the right moment. No such national games can you boast of in the South, I know !’

‘In the South we sing,’ the chevalier replied, laughing, ‘and that is everything to us.’

‘And here we wrestle and fight, and in good earnest too, as you will see. Comtesse, can you bear the sight ?’

‘I fear not ; not to the end.’

‘But we will try to avoid the end ; and no doubt by remaining here in your carriage you will. It is a good place which commands many roads, and you will have a first-rate view of the start at least.’

‘Oh ! aunt, let us stay.’

‘There is no reason why you young people should not,’ replied the comtesse, ‘even if I go away, but I will stop with you

here, dear child, as long as blood does not flow ; that I cannot bear to see.'

'A game where blood flows !' exclaimed the chevalier.

'And freely—but what do our young men care ? Do they not train all the year round for their wrestling, racing, and this foot-ball which is the crown of everything ? Wait, and you will see.'

As they were disposing themselves for a good view of the game, hurrahs were heard from hundreds of throats, for the tenants of the marquis had caught sight of the party. A strong stalwart man made his way towards them, and the marquis cried out :

'Ah, Ivon, in for the *Soule* again ?'

'Yes, yes, Monsieur le Marquis, in for the *Soule* once more before old age comes ; the youngsters have always something to learn from their elders about it. But,

Monsieur le Marquis, I am so proud to see you here ; it is as it should be. And you are bringing us many people to the Château, I hope ?’

‘ You are always wanting the house full, Ivon ! My dear comtesse, this is my head-farmer, and a terrible task-master he is ! If I were to listen to him, I should always live at L—— and have the place full of people and make a great show of my money.’

‘ Nay, nay, master, the likes of you should shine ; but as to the showing of money——’

‘ You don’t approve of that ?’

‘ No, Monsieur le Marquis, no, never show your money.’

‘ Better put it in a stocking, eh ! Ivon ?’

The peasant looked at him with a sly amused look.

‘There be some in the world who would require a rare large stocking, methinks.’

‘I should, you think?’

‘Our farms are doing well, master, very well, and our cattle have greatly increased.’

‘Ah! I see: you want me to praise you before my cousins?’

‘I say our farms are doing well and we have plenty of money; but it is yours to spend, master, and I am right glad when you spend part of it here; although you can spend it wherever you please.’

‘You are very generous, Ivon, very generous, considering that you have all the hard work and I all the fun.’

‘Some there be who are born to show us poor folks the better things that are on the earth. ’Twould be a sad world,

master, if there were none but peasants like us everywhere.'

'That is your view of it? So you are not like those men in Paris who would destroy us altogether?'

'Maybe they have other great things to choose out of; we have only you and yours, Monsieur le Marquis.'

The Marquis laughed, and said,

'Ivon, your speech is most flattering? So, if I understand you right, I must make the most of myself to make you happy?'

'Yes, master; I like to see the likes of you in grand coaches, and on good horses and bravely dressed. I want to see your beautiful ladies with their stiff silk gowns and hear their honeyed words.'

'In fact, you are a born aristocrat,

Ivon. But, if I remember right, you were always bravely dressed yourself as a young fellow. Ah! Ivon, beware of vanity! But I will do my best to please you, and bring all the ladies that are left in the land if they will only come. You see, here is my cousin, Mademoiselle de Kerguennec, who brings her *fiancé* with her.'

'Oh, mam'zelle, my congratulations! Monsieur is not a Breton?'

'No, but as good as one, since he likes a Bretonne, you see. I am glad to introduce you to him. He has many servants at his own place, but none better than you, I feel sure. I hope you are increasing in wealth, Ivon?'

'My master and we do that, thanks to the Almighty.'

'And thanks also to your energy and cleverness, we all know that.'

The farmer laughed, and looking towards the people:

‘I must go now,’ he said. ‘The game will soon begin, though I am not among the first to play.’

‘I suppose not; among the last, most likely,’ said the marquis.

‘Yes, master—among the last.’ And the man looked well pleased.

‘What a character the fellow is,’ the marquis went on, after the man had left. ‘You will see him looking as proud as a peacock, when we have many people here, for we are one family—“Our cows and our horses and our farms are doing well!” You should see him try to sell a cow, as I did once, while some of my friends from Paris were looking on. It might have been as a compliment paid to me, to be sure; for the man is shrewd enough for anything. But how my friends laughed!

“Monsieur le Marquis and I could not sell that cow for less, we really could not let it go for less!—Monsieur le Marquis and I know all her good points, and at one time she gave us a deal of trouble. Monsieur le Marquis was telling me only this very morning, ‘Ivon, shall we, or shall we not sell that most excellent cow? As to those pigs, Ivon,’” &c., &c. Whenever any of those friends see me, they are sure to ask me how my fellow cowherd is doing.’

‘I suppose he is truthful?’ said the chevalier.

‘Oh, dear yes; and faithful from father to son. I believe he could trace his pedigree as far back as my own. His family has been attached to ours for generations. You should have heard him when told he must not pay me any more tithes or tolls, according to the new laws. He was quite offended—“Do those people of Paris

take us for thieves, that we should not pay our seigneur his due?" And I receive my tithes just as in the past.'

'Yes, so do I,' said the comte. 'But how long it is to last, and how long we are to keep such men attached to our families under the new régime, Heaven only knows!—But the game is beginning!'

At that moment, several hundred men from different parishes advanced, and formed themselves into two camps. They threw off their jackets, and were seen to be all more or less dressed alike,—that is, with tight-fitting flannels and short, tight breeches, naked legs and arms, and thick shoes, and even *sabots*, weighing several pounds.

The winner of the last *Soule* was repeating the rules, which may be thus summarized:—

The goal was any one of the parishes

of the players (many of them lived eight or ten miles off).

There were no boundaries.

Scragging, tripping, and hacking were allowed, (practically anything and everything was permitted).

The prize was the *Soule* itself, to which was added a black bullock.—

The players, all strong men, the flower of their village, listen to the rules, their piercing eyes fixed on the speaker, their clenched fists and outstretched necks betraying the intensity with which they look forward to the first rush.

At last the cry comes, as of old, for tournaments :

‘ Lists ! Lists !’

The crowd retires to the limits of the meadow ; the ball is thrown up, and the mad struggle begins.

All the men of the same parish keep well together, and are distinguished by some particular sign.

For a long time the ball remains where it has first fallen, so great is the crush, so ardent the players; and for a long time also it seems to the lookers-on as if no game were possible for that day. Suddenly there is a cry, 'Ivon! Ploërmel!' Ivon at the head of his party has gone head foremost against the struggling group and has rushed madly away, carrying the ball with him. The apparently hopeless block is broken up at last, and the whole indescribable mass starts at his heels. But he is a fast runner, as all who have run races with him know; and he shrinks at nothing. A wide stream is before him; nothing loth he jumps into it and swims across, while the hundreds of players follow him, never

considering whether they can swim or not, and are carried over by their very violence and number.

Ivon is caught at last, and retires to gain strength for the final struggle. The ball is kicked back again over the stream and carried this time towards a thick hedge some eight or ten feet high. After another dreadful scrimmage they break through, their hair entangled with twigs and leaves, their faces torn and bleeding. They come to a village, rush *pêle-mêle* through it, swarm round the cottages, through the narrow lanes, on to a long high-road. Some take short cuts and fall suddenly upon their opponents, and both parties stagger at the charge. Further on a terrible fight goes on; many a brawny arm is seen rising above the crowd; many a fist descends with fearful strength on uplifted faces. It is

time for the comtesse to retire, if she does not wish to see the worst.

Fortunately they can follow the game no more; the players having reached the top of a rugged hill, a violent kick sends the ball flying, and down they rush headlong, pushing, tumbling, rolling, and leave at the bottom the weaker ones almost crushed to death.

Meanwhile, hither and thither sway the numerous spectators, uttering wild shrieks and cries of encouragement. They have lost all control over themselves; they call out the names of those they love or know, to urge them on. But they leave the wounded behind; no pity is there for the fallen—eyes and hearts are all for the strong.

The number of players has greatly diminished, and the best players who have held themselves in reserve draw near.

The exhausted men fall back and leave the glory of their parishes to them.*

But it is as well for us to draw the veil on the last struggle that ensues. As the marquis and his party, after having long lost sight of the players, reached Ploërmel, loud cries greeted them; and they heard that Ivon had won the *Soule* once again.

* The game was forbidden by the government after the Revolution; for both Royalists and Republicans used it as a means of revenge, and even murder.

CHAPTER XI.

THUS it happened that the favourite farmer of the marquis was the winner of the *Soule* for that year. Ivon was in all his glory, and was petted by the ladies of the Château, who went to his cottage, overran his farm, praised everything he did, and wondered that he had not married yet.

That he enjoyed the sunshine of their presence was evident, but that he gloried even more in the greatness of his master was evident also. Every night he roamed about within sight of the Château, look-

ing up at the many lights there, as if each told of his own and of his master's fortune; listening to the singing as if it came from superior beings, of whom, however, he formed a part. Envy was unknown to him, and if anyone had told him of a greater man than the marquis, his master, he would not have believed them—the king might be greater, but kings were always full of faults, as every Breton knew, and he saw no fault in his master. And yet with this truly Breton faithfulness he had cunning, as indeed most of the Breton peasants have—the outcome, perhaps, of their endless struggles, first in feudal times against the unruly barons, and later on against the French kings, who would fain have crushed out their national existence altogether.

Such was Ivon, the man who was to

play a most important part in the story of the Marquis de L——.

The Château, now full of guests, offered on the outside no beauty to speak of; but it had lately been repaired in the style of Louis XV., and was most finely decorated and adorned in the interior. The family having been twice allied to royalty, there were many princely gifts of great value to their owner; beautiful Gobelin tapestry, the gift of one king, a splendid clock the gift of another, and so on. The marquis had as yet hidden none of these things. He was one of those who did not believe in the Republic; one of those who expected it to disappear with the same violence it had come in; who counted the days it had yet to live, and who refused to believe in the—to others—fearful realities of the times. He was worshipped by his people;—he had

done no one any harm, and could not believe the popular fury might even reach him.

Everyone was happy at the Château. Renée, in all her dazzling loveliness and modesty, won every heart, and was the favourite of high and low. What time was there left for her to read in her own heart? How could she foresee the dark future in store in the very Château where all was now life and joy? Even Rohan de Carnoët was to count these days among the happiest of his life;—this being in her presence continually. With his Breton stolidity, he could glide down the stream of love almost unknown to himself.

Ivon had waited very long before marrying; but, when the grand ladies at the Château joked with him because of his being still a bachelor, he did not tell

them that he was even then going through all the preliminaries of Breton peasant courtship. One day, however, a handsome couple in beautiful costumes presented themselves at the Château; they were Ivon and his *fiancée* coming to invite everybody there to their wedding; and the marquis, proud of them, took them at once to the drawing-room, where everyone accepted the invitation with alacrity.

The girl Ivon had chosen was a well-to-do peasant with many a gold braid to her skirt on Sundays and fête-days; and it had been necessary for Ivon to go through his courtship according to established custom. The parents of the girl, having been told of the wishes of the rich farmer, had prepared themselves for his first visit. On the day appointed, Ivon and all his relations, mounted on their horses, had

arrived to view the possessions of the girl. His friends had highly approved of his choice, and her parents had in a general way expressed themselves willing to agree to his suit. After the first visit, the lover had retired for a time, and his cause had been taken up by many a grave beggar (treated always with much respect in Brittany) and many a tailor, who had come every day to the cottage to speak of his love; when, to make believe that his suit was rejected, they had found the frying-pan turned bottom upwards, or the burning wood on end, smoking up the large chimney! By this it was meant: that he was to go and look elsewhere.

One day the miller, the acknowledged wit of the village, and usual go-between in such affairs, had come. He had made sure of success beforehand, for, when he had first opened his door to go out on his errand,

he had retreated successfully on seeing a magpie ! And when he tried a second time he had seen two doves cooing to each other !

No one could resist his eloquence, and the bride had been won after many a flower of rhetoric spent upon her. Then had the house and all the possessions of the girl been finally prepared ; and on the next day the stable and hayloft had been visited ; the deep wide cupboards had stood open showing the quantity of linen and *coiffes* belonging to the bride-elect.

At last the day for the wedding had been fixed, and to work had gone all the people of the village, the weaver with his best wool ; and the tailor with his golden thread working embroideries worthy of a queen, to be added to those of past generations. For two whole months had the work progressed ; and then had the future

bride and bridegroom set forth together to make their invitations. Masters and servants, friends and relatives,—the whole household indeed of château or cottage, had been invited.

At last all was ready, and the day before the wedding, beggars, tailors, millers and all, had gone to witness the formal accepting of the linen-press of the bride in her future home.

A long time had it taken the workmen to make this fine and large linen-press of carved walnut with its elaborate brass mountings, so well stocked now with everything the bride might require for many a day. It was put on a cart and dragged by two oxen, their necks adorned with ribbons and flowers, and with a white heifer following the cart.

As the procession left the house of the bride, the village bells sent forth their joyful peals.

But when the cart reached his door they found it closed, and the master was nowhere to be found. They knocked and knocked, and at last the people from the inside held a long parley with them, and more eloquence was displayed on both parts. But, as the door still remained closed, sticks and blows were used, and finally it was forced open, and the wardrobe entered in all his glory, and was put in the place of honour. And its doors being opened its riches stood revealed to the eyes of the bridegroom and his assistants.

The day of the wedding comes at last, and merrily ring the village bells ; the bride is taken to church by her parents, and the bridegroom follows with his friends. How handsome they look, and how bravely dressed in silver and gold, embroidery and lace ! Are these the poor peasants, the tillers of the ground ? Are these the hard-

working women whose share upon earth is to toil so unmercifully?

The crowd fills the church, and the silver ring, with its heart coloured red, is passed on the finger of the bride.

The mass is said, and they enter the vestry, and there the priest offers the newly-married couple bread and wine. He breaks the bread in two pieces, tastes each piece first, and then gives it to them; and so with the wine. Only one glass is there; he carries it to his lips, and the two drink after him.

The ceremony is over, the guns fire and the bells ring, and bride and bridegroom come forth.

Outside, however, the children of the village have assembled, and hold the thick branch of a tree on which is tied, with a red ribbon, a bull-finch, which tries its

best to escape. It is the bride who must give it its freedom. She comes, and, with a pair of scissors, cuts the ribbon, and sends the bird back to liberty.

And now for the dancing, with those intricate and wonderful figures which made once the admiration of the court of Louis XIV. Marvellously light are the feet of the cow-driver, of the ploughman, and of all. The heavy *sabot* has been replaced by a thin, low shoe; the stocking is pulled on the well-shaped leg, and they go from place to place in the hamlets and villages around, inviting everybody, by stopping and dancing before each cottage-door in turn. The miller, his pistols in his large, bright sash four or five yards long, fires in the air now and then, and dances and capers before the bride.

And thus they go on; all the people of the Château joining in the fun. Renée,

as a compliment to the bride, is dressed in peasant clothes ; and how handsome a peasant-girl she looks ! Even the good Duchess Anne of loved memory, who had done the same many years before, could not have looked handsomer. Her white *coiffe* surrounds the fine oval of her face, and increases her stature. The open bodice is all aglow with gold embroidery ; her white chemisette open at the throat, the white sleeves, the long silk apron, the scarlet dress—ah ! a noble maiden in a noble costume ! Everyone admires her, and the honours of the wedding are divided between the peasant bride and the noble lady.

At last the dancing is over, and the feasting begins. High and low, every one from château or village—master and servant, noble and peasant, all are there. Every door is shut, except the

one where the feast is held. The cider runs liberally, and the singing goes on, the sad and melancholy singing of the Breton.

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But good-night to you, good people! The pretty conceits of your courtship are ended, and, alas! in our own days are fast disappearing altogether. The toil and hardships remain still, but most of the poetry has flown never to return.

CHAPTER XII.

BRIDE and bridegroom have settled down at last, lovers love on, and friends are happy in each other's society. They are dancing at the Château. The drawing-room, ball-room, and dining-room are dazzling with light—flowers and beauty, soft-toned voices and sweet perfumes, good will and tenderness, comfort and peace are all there. Why should sorrow come and mar the beauty of faces and dull the bright eyes?

A loud ring is heard at the gate. It is cold, fearfully cold, outside, so the ring is

answered quickly by the ready servants of the hospitable nobleman, and two men looking like Breton peasants, and *pen-bac'h* in hand, enter. They ask to speak to the marquis, and he, suspecting who they are, hurries out.

‘Come in, come in, dear friends,’ he cries, as he recognises them, ‘come in and be welcome by all. What! and have you returned to France, you *émigrés* condemned to die if you touched once more the soil of your fatherland? Come in—come in and see your old friends—happy—still.’

The two men follow the marquis, and accompany him to the door of the ball-room. They gaze on the scene in silence for a few moments, but their faces are sad and solemn. The dancers cease dancing, and, approaching the travellers, wait for them to speak.

‘You are dancing here,’ one of them says at last. ‘Do you then not know the news?’

‘The news? What news?’

‘The news from Paris.’

‘No.’

‘The king is dead.’

‘The king? The king dead?’

‘On the scaffold.’

A cry of horror escapes every breast. The king dead, murdered, and by his subjects! Can such a thing be possible? Those men and women, so gay a moment before, look blankly into each other’s faces. Is royalty at an end? Is that vile crew in Paris, reigning over France, and are they in its power? No, not so long as a port remains free in Brittany. They will not run the risk of falling into such hands and of being soiled by contact with the murderers of their king. And

to-morrow, to-morrow at dawn more nobles will have left France—to avenge their king and their country.

Meanwhile the two gentlemen, who have retired with the marquis and the more serious men of the party, are considering their powers of resistance. The newcomers break into two pieces on their knee the sticks they carry, which contain dispatches from the king's brother and plans of a future campaign; and once more the famed room opens to receive the conspirators. A De Poncalec is there, and a De Carnoët, and many others, sitting perhaps on the very seats their fathers have used. Will the Breton be for ever ready to resist oppression and tyranny under whatever name they present themselves? or will not the failure—the terrible failure of a generation before—tell him to beware? But faithful and true, brave

and loyal, he considers life inferior to duty.

On the morrow the guests found themselves scattered far and wide, only a small number remaining at the Château—those determined to plan a rebellion and those who clustered round the invalid Comtesse de Kerguennec, whom the bad news had prostrated anew.

Very few in number were the nobles left in Brittany at that time, and on these devolved the care of calling the peasants to arms. On this decision being taken, the marquis sent for Ivon, who, with his influence over others and his greater means, would prove a most powerful ally. And Ivon came.

The marquis was alone, his friends being busy travelling here and there to promote the end in view; and it was as well.

‘Ivon,’ he said, ‘you have heard of those infamous doings in Paris—heard that the king has been murdered?’

‘I have, master,’ and Ivon looked stern and hard.

‘I have resolved to side with those determined to avenge him.’

Ivon kept silent, and the marquis went on—rising up in his impatience to act, and not paying much attention to the man he was addressing.

‘And, Ivon, I want your help. We must, every man of us, unite against these miserable wretches; we must fall in with the plans of the late Marquis of Rouërie,—now those of the Comte de Puisaye. I will see that you all have arms; you will be brave and follow us, and hold your own against those who attack you?’

‘If they come and attack us, master.’

The tone of the answer fell unpleasantly on the marquis' ear, and he faced Ivon with a frown.

'Do you doubt that they will?' he asked him, sharply.

'I believe that, if we remain quiet, they will not attack us.'

'What do you mean?' cried the marquis; 'would you refuse to join those who are ready to fight for royalty?'

'We shall lose everything if we do,' was the peasant's reply.

'Ah, has the love of money so taken hold of your heart that you had rather act the coward's part than risk what you possess? Many are there fighting at this very hour for priest and king—and you, Ivon, you hesitate?'

The man said nothing; not even the anger of his seigneur could force him to fight if he had determined not to do so,

and the marquis went on: 'You! not fight, Ivon!'

'Monsieur le Marquis, I did not say I would not fight; I said if we were attacked I would. We are too weak, master; against the republicans we can do nothing, and if I may say so, Monsieur le Marquis, it would be better if the two gentlemen, just returned from England, left you. They are known for what they are, and they will bring trouble upon you. You should send them away at once.'

The marquis looked at him, and replied, haughtily,

'You may act the part of a coward, if you like, but you will scarcely persuade me to do so. Will you or will you not influence the peasants to fight? But, of course, to fight only when our plans of resistance are ripe.'

‘ If they come to attack us, we will fight ; we will not leave the parish.’

‘ And this is all you will do for us, for God and the throne ?’

‘ For you, master, I will give up my life.’

‘ I do not want your life, man, but your devotion to the cause I serve.’

‘ We cannot leave the parish ; if they come and attack us we will fight.’

The marquis’s anger and disgust were fast getting the better of him, and he was on the eve of calling *hound* and *cur* the man he had always petted and admired, when Ivon calmly repeated his warning :

‘ Master, I entreat you to send those men away—they will be your ruin ; I feel they will be your ruin. Soldiers have been seen leaving Vannes, and nobody knows where they are going ; they may be coming here, master. I entreat you, send

the men away and save yourself and your Château from ruin. I am ready to defend you, master, to defend you with my own life; but you must send those men away.'

'Soldiers have left Vannes, do you say?' interrupted the marquis. 'How long ago?'

'The day before yesterday.'

'And who told you?'

'I know.'

'Who told you?' repeated the marquis, fiercely.

'Some one from Vannes who saw them.'

The marquis paused a moment; angry as he was at the turn the conversation had taken, he was not so rash as not to feel his danger if he were suspected of harbouring returned *émigrés*. But he thought Ivon even able to tell him a falsehood to secure his own peace and money, and he went on:

‘ If they left the day before yesterday, they would have reached us ere this, supposing they were coming here. Is it the truth you are telling me ?’

‘ I want you, master, to save yourself ; it is the truth I am telling you.’

‘ Very well, I begin to see that you are afraid of the *Bleus*, and that is why you refuse to join us in our plan of resistance. I have done with you ; if anyone had told me Ivon was a coward, I could not have believed it.’

The man laughed darkly, and repeated, while going away :

‘ If the soldiers come, we will fight ; if they come, we will fight ; but we won’t leave the parish.’

He was almost out of the marquis’s hearing when the latter called him back. In his heart he had already forgiven him, and the important communication could

not be allowed thus to fall to the ground.

Ivon returned, his face as stern and hard as at the beginning of the interview, and the marquis said to him :

‘Ivon, if what you tell me about these soldiers is true, I feel I have not explained myself properly and have been unjust. Of course some men must remain at home, but some will have to go. There is no need for you to leave L—— ; but the young men who refused to serve the Republic, and who would be shot like dogs if found, ought not to refuse to serve in the army of the king. I hope you will not set yourself against this.’

‘No, master, no.’

‘Well then, come and see my friends, they must all be told your news ; it may prove of the utmost importance to them, and no doubt they had better leave L—— at once.’

‘They had better go, Monsieur le Marquis.’

‘I am afraid the comtesse is too ill to be moved.’

‘I will remove her in my arms to our cottage, if she will let me. I have thought of it all.’

‘Then you really think the thing serious?’

‘I believe you are in danger, master.’

The marquis looked at Ivon, but nothing could be read on his rigid and dogged face. On reaching the room where his guests were assembled, he told them of Ivon’s warning and of his own fears, and at once the position was understood by them. One and all, according to Ivon’s advice, prepared for flight—all except the comtesse. Surely if soldiers came they would not arrest her; the comte and all the others must hide,

and Renée also. But Renée refused to leave her, and the comte, unwilling to resist her wishes, hoped he could manage to watch over her unseen when the time came.

Everybody was busy at the Château now; servants ran to and fro; horses and carriages were got in readiness for a sudden start, and the marquis, with Renée and with Ivon—the only one he could trust entirely of his own household—went from room to room and carried away unseen what was considered most precious. Pictures, vases, gold and silver, swords, diamonds, and all the accumulation of centuries in fine-art and fine workmanship were there, and it was hard work to choose, hard work to dismantle the rooms, hard work to carry everything to those hiding-places of generations before. Once there, however, they were safe.

The secret remained hid in the bosoms of those two the marquis had trusted ; Ivon and Renée alone were answerable before him and before God for the safety of part of his fortune.

The short winter day was drawing to a close ; the marquis had bid farewell to his friends and was pacing up and down his mansion, deprived of its most beautiful ornaments, and looking desolate in his eyes. In the sick-room with the comtesse were together for awhile before separating for the night the comte, the Chevalier de Valvourgs, and the two De Carnoëts. The silence succeeding to so many days of pleasure, and the animation that had prevailed during the day, seemed strange to the few left behind, and was painful to bear for the invalid. Her courage had gone with the coming night, and she now regretted she was endangering

those dear to her and who persisted in not leaving her.

‘To-morrow,’ she said, ‘I will go to Ivon’s farm.’

Meanwhile, Ivon, who knew how to reach the marquis without the help of servants, passed silently from room to room, looking out for him, and meeting him at last, said quickly,

‘Monsieur le Marquis, fly at once; the soldiers are coming this way; there is no doubt about it. I hear they left Kergo last night — and — and —’ the peasant seemed suddenly to be overcome by a terrible agitation; then went on: ‘Do you remember Guillemot the farmer?’

‘Certainly.’

‘They have been fighting for some time at Kergo, and yesterday the *Bleus* were there. When told they were coming, everybody rushed away, carrying their chil-

dren with them, and trying to separate, so as not to attract attention. The soldiers took away horses and oxen, cows and sheep, corn and hay—everything they could lay their hands on. The people returned for the night to their houses, but several were missing—among others, Guillemot and his little girl six months old. This morning, by accident, he was discovered—he must have been seen crossing a field—he had one of his legs broken by a shot, and the soldiers had nailed his head to the ground with a plough-share. His little girl was found alive, still by him. She had spent the whole night there.’

The marquis, speechless with horror, looked at Ivon. What! could those men thus murder a defenceless man with a child in his arms? Was it possible

that such savage deeds could take place at a few leagues' distance from his house? That Guillemot he had known well as an honest, intelligent man. Were all his people exposed to such treatment?

‘I am grieved, Ivon, grieved at this beyond what I can say. I hope you are preparing yourselves, in case they come to you. Can I do anything for you?’

‘Give us all the arms you can; the people have dug holes, and have been hiding their things all day—as we have been doing here. It will be better for us to run away too, if they come—people are on the watch, and will let us know. But you, master, go now; you have horses and servants, go to Douameney. I hear there is an English boat not far off cruising and waiting for those very men who came to you.’

Then, as he saw the surprise of the marquis at finding him so well informed, he went on :

‘We have to watch and be careful ; and everywhere beggars, and men disguised as beggars, are finding out news for us.’

‘And all this time we have been amusing ourselves here. I could never have believed it—never have believed the danger so serious and so near. But what about the comtesse ?’

‘They won’t come to-night, and to-morrow morning we will remove her.’

‘Let it be so.’

‘Go now, Monsieur le Marquis ; for, if they come, it will be for you.’

‘Thank you, Ivon ; I will see to it. I must go to my friends now and tell them, and advise them to flee.’

The peasant watched the marquis in silence, and then said,

‘I will go and get your horse ready, master. Which servant will you take?’

‘Let it be Yehan. Good-bye, Ivon, good-bye. I have trusted you as few men have ever been trusted by another. You will be faithful to your master, even in his absence?’

‘You can trust me, master; I will watch over the Château as long as I live.’

‘God reward you, Ivon. God reward you according to your desert. Now I must go to the comte. How I wish they could all leave at once. Good-bye, Ivon, good-bye.’

‘Go, master, go, your horse will soon be ready for you. And I also should like to go to my house and see after things there.’

‘Don’t wait for me, Ivon, I can manage now.’

But Ivon shook his head, and said,

‘I will first see you in safety, master.’

Ivon was wrong when he said the soldiers would not come that night. As he was on his way to the stables, and the marquis had only just reached his friends, a great noise was heard outside, and cries of, ‘Fly, fly, the soldiers are coming!’ reached him. The whole population had left their homes and were calling out to him on their way.

The gentlemen looked at each other.

‘All the men must have left the village; we cannot resist. Quick, marquis, they are coming for you, no doubt; we shall manage,’ said the comte.

‘But you and Renée—and the comtesse——’

‘Her illness will account for our presence. Do not hesitate.’

‘There is a hiding-place in the Château.’

‘Yes, but of what use will it be when

those men are established here? Waste no more time. We will see to ourselves. Chevalier, accompany the marquis a little way ; but be on your guard.'

'But you, Renée, who can watch over you?'

'The fewer we are the better. I am sure my uncle is right. And you also, Monsieur Rohan.'

'Certainly,' replied Rohan, calmly.—
'But not with the marquis,' he said to himself, as he hurried out.

'Hark!' cried the comte, suddenly.
'What is that?'

'The soldiers are here. It is the
"Marseillaise!"'

The friends press each other's hands, and the marquis leaves them. But on his way he meets Ivon.

'Hide yourself, master ; it is too dangerous for you to go now.'

Renée and the comtesse remain alone, they also hear the cries and the ‘Marseillaise ;’ and in silence and with beating hearts they listen as the strains grow louder and louder, fiercer and more fierce.

CHAPTER XIII.

.

‘ FORWARD ! sons of France, the day of glory now is nigh !
 To arms, citizens ! form your battalions !
 Forward ! forward ! may their craven blood water our
 furrows !’

And the refrain recurs again and again, and the wild, overpowering air urges them on. Noble hymn of war, grand ‘ Mar-seillaise,’ who can resist thy power ? Offspring of enthusiasm—knell of the glory of kings ! Yell of sanguinary fury—heroic outburst of patriotism and liberty ! What does the Republic not owe to thee ?

‘Forward ! forward !
To arms, citizens !’

And to its rhythmic cadence, their hearts beating with force and fury, fall the steps of those terrible battalions, those saviours of their country ; those soldiers of a day ; ill-fed, ill-clothed ; but ready for any excess—nay, for any crime ; for any self-sacrifice, for any degree of valour ! And ever victorious !

‘What would this horde of traitors, of slaves, and of kings united against France ?

For whom these ignominious fetters ?

To arms ! may their craven blood water our furrows !’

And the strain pursues a king on his way to death ; a king whose heart overflows with indignation and righteous wrath ; the best and most virtuous of the Bourbon kings ! Alas ! one look upon the past which has brought him on the scaffold, one glance towards the future, he lays his royal head low.

‘Forward! forward! may their craven blood water our
furrows!’

And the defenders of the Republic go
through the towns and villages, clothed in
rags, covered with dust and blood :—blood
from a woman’s dripping head! blood
from the heart of an aristocrat! blood
from the body of a little child!

‘Forward! forward!
To arms, citizens!’

And the same song leads men to glory!
And thousands of men come forward, leave
behind what makes life dear, and rush to
the frontier:

‘Tremble, tyrants, and you who fight against your country,
Disgrace of the human race!
Against you all become soldiers!—
Forward! forward! may their craven blood water our
furrows!’

Prussians, Austrians, they are your natu-
ral enemies; but the noblemen of France,
pitiless tigers who rend their mother’s
bosom, what are they doing among these?

Sacred love of country, guide and sustain our avenging arms,
To arms, citizens! form your battalions!
Forward! forward! may their craven blood water our
furrows!

But, mighty outburst of indignation
and wrath, noble ‘Marseillaise,’ wherefore
has the magic of thy power ceased?
How is it that thy manly strains are no
longer taken up by thousands? Ah! in
thy wild justice thou hast forgotten that
there are loyal hearts that will cling to the
past! will cling to it with all its faults and
virtues! Ignorant peasants with long,
streaming hair, iron frames and still more
iron wills, hear thee indeed—but answer
not! In vain dost thou call on them!
In vain dost thou invite them to glory!
They will not hear, but will deal the first
blow at the Republic thou dost proclaim,
and to thy cry of defiance reply, ‘*Le roi est
mort, vive le roi.*’

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Those at Ploërmel were in hiding; the soldiers passed through a deserted village, came to the Château, and, the butt-ends of their guns striking sharply on the threshold, they asked admittance in the name of the Republic.

The trembling servant opened to them.

‘What will you here?’

‘Thy master, the ci-devant Marquis——’

‘My master is not here.’

‘He was here yesterday and this morning.

Take care how thou dost answer us.’

‘I know not where he is.’ And he speaks the truth.

‘Very well, we must visit the Château for ourselves and see.’

They stop before the Comte de Kerguennec.

‘Who art thou, *citoyen*?’

‘My name is Kerguennec.’

‘What dost thou here?’

‘I was on a visit here, but my wife fell ill; and I and my family are the only ones left.’

‘Thy wife ill? Where is she? Let us see her.’

‘But your presence will terrify her; I entreat you, forbear.’

‘We would judge for ourselves of the truth of thy speech, *citoyen*. Lead us to her.’

‘She is in bed and very ill.’

‘Beware how thou dost resist, or we may find a prompt and quick remedy that would cure her altogether.’

And a ferocious smile is on every face.

‘Allow me to go and forewarn her.’

‘Nay, nay, thou and thine order are all deceivers; we will go with thee.’

The comte goes to his wife’s room and knocks.

‘Renée,’ he asks, ‘Renée!’

And Renée comes forth; a beautiful, deadly-pale woman, but neither afraid nor trembling. She shuts the door after her and faces the soldiers.

‘*Ma foi ! citoyen*, thou hast a handsome wife, but thou didst lie to us—she is not ill !’

‘This is my niece, and not my wife.’

‘*Citoyenne*, what is thy name?’

‘Renée de Kerguennec.’

‘Well, Renée de Kerguennec, thou art a fine woman; but it will go hard with thee all the same if thy uncle has not told the truth ! Where is the sick woman?’

‘Renée, can you tell your aunt that she must see these men?’

‘She will see them.’

And Renée opens the door wide, for the comtesse has been forewarned, and has summoned all her strength to face the ordeal. Pale and faint, she tries to sit up

as the soldiers stream into the room. Her trembling, thin hands on the counterpane clasping and unclasping, she looks towards the soldiers with a sad, pitiful look while they none the less go to her and ask her roughly,

‘Art thou the wife of the citizen Kerguennec?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where is the *ci-devant* Marquis de L——? Dost thou know?’

‘I do not, indeed.’

‘How long is it since he left?’

‘Not long.’

‘Where was he going?’

‘I do not know.’

‘He has left here, thou art sure?’

‘Yes, he must have left now.’

‘Left when he heard us?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then he cannot be very far off,’ said

the officer, addressing his men. ‘Unfortunately we cannot run after him in this darkness. Meanwhile, search the room and see if these aristocrats tell me the truth.’

The men looked under the bed, searched everywhere, even between the mattresses—for might not the marquis be there, and had they not already found one hiding after that fashion?

At last they leave the comtesse half dead with fright.

‘Now search the house.’

The whole party disperses, and for a long time the noise of the butt-end of their guns knocking against the walls and doors and partitions is heard. But, wherever the marquis is, they do not find him, and they return to the room where they had first met the comte.

‘*Citoyen* Kerguennec, listen,’ said the officer, opening a large paper.—“In the

name of the Republic one and indivisible, the *citoyen* L—— is declared traitor to his country, and condemned to death for having held communication with and harboured the enemies of France, foreigners and *émigrés*. All the property of the said *citoyen* is declared forfeited and passes into the hands of the nation to be used for the benefit of the Republic—Long live France! Long live the Republic!” We would leave men in the place to-morrow, but, considering that thou art here, with thy sick wife, and that thou art a lover of the Republic, as we must believe, we place the property in thy hands a few days. See, then, that nothing is removed—thou answerest for it with thy head. Thou wilt go when the Republic has replaced thee.’

The officer and his men then withdrew ; and long was the noise that went on before

they retired to rest. Early in the morning, however, they were heard leaving the Château in silence.

As they passed through the empty village, and searched the cottages, they little dreamed of the danger in their rear, for, what the song of the 'Marseillaise' could not do, the danger the marquis was running had accomplished. Of a common accord, and with Rohan de Carnoët at their head, the peasants had assembled for the work of rescue, and had waited for the soldiers all night. If these had brought out with them any prisoner, neither their being unprepared for war, unarmed, or in smaller numbers would have stopped the peasants from rushing upon their enemies, and the players of the *Soule* would soon have known how to bring them down to the ground. Very different from the

gorgeously-dressed peasants did they look now, with their goat-skin coats, the coarse hair of which mixed unpleasantly with their long, dark locks ; their thick shoes, or sabots, half-filled with straw, their common leather gaiters, and their broad, black felt hats deep on their heads. No wonder their enemies, when suddenly brought to face such foes—who had watched for them, lurking behind trees, and hedges, and druidical monuments—called them savages. But, such as they were, these had sworn in their hearts, on that early morning, to avenge the profaned sacredness of their homes !

CHAPTER XIV.

GREAT was the astonishment of those left at the Château to find that the marquis was still there. But his flight had now become imperative.—

Farewell to you, farewell, for who knows when friends who part thus will meet again? Farewell to those we hold most dear! Farewell to the beloved country—since evil passions will drive men like chaff before the tempestuous wind; since even the noblest ideas must be profaned by the vilest of men; since peace is not to be had on the earth! Fare-

well to the hearth that has seen us on our mother's knee; to the home where the young bride has come and died, leaving a perfume of remembrance behind her to be treasured up and cherished! Farewell to the house of our ancestors, which is doomed to be plundered and sold and pass into the hands of the stranger!

Now have we become like waifs upon the earth, homeless, hopeless, and often poor. Ah! if only the mother-country could profit by our tears! But God knows best.

Exile! exile! ah, thou art a bitter thing! Who will speak to us the language we love? Who will hold out to us the hand of companionship? Who will weep with us over the fall of our country, and be indulgent over its sins? Who will blend their hopes with ours that it may some

day be great again? The bread of her enemies must we eat; the hand of her enemies must we press; the judgment passed over her by her enemies must we hear; their contempt and hatred must we contend with. Farewell, farewell and for ever! Who knows?

And the gates of the Château shut behind its master as they have shut behind those who have enjoyed his princely hospitality. Those days of laughter and singing and mirth are gone; now is the horizon of sorrow stretching far and wide before the marquis; whether he goes north or south, east or west, exile is before him!

A dreary silence falls over the place. The horse in the stable neighs in vain for his master; the servants weep in vain; they also must leave the home where no master is left. The flowers droop and die

in the rooms they have adorned—in the hot-houses they have made brilliant.

Nature is lovely even in its deepest recesses ; in its wildness and in its very dreariness it has its charms ; but the habitation of man, however beautifully designed and adorned, requires life to make it bearable. The sun's rays look out of place when streaming on treasures that were once carefully guarded against its scorching light ; the silence is oppressive, the atmosphere heavy—a nest without a bird, an empty cage, a body from which the soul has fled !——

Those left in that desolate mansion roamed about disconsolately, feeling so much the more its depressive loneliness that nothing in it belonged to them ; that they were prisoners in it !

Then men came who took possession of everything, made long lists of what had

made life pleasant, set a value of their own on objects of inestimable worth to the rightful owner. They lounged about in the chairs where beauty had reigned; revelled in profane jests where the utmost refinement had been, and made the noble place resound with ribald and drunken songs.

Then the walls of the old pile were covered with large bills, bearing at the top a device:—the eye of the law, and pikes surmounted by the Phrygian cap with the words :

Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.

‘In the name of the Republic one and indivisible this house and all the property it contains, are declared national property to be sold immediately to the profit of the nation. Long live the Republic!’

Then followed a list of all valuables and goods.

‘Let us go, let us go away at once now we can,’ cried the comtesse; ‘carry me, drag me, but take me away. Oh! that such a calamity should have come in our day to a friend we love; that such a fate should be threatening us also! Why cannot I send away my dear ones to spare them such a sight, send them away out of the reach of the depraved and wicked, or—die, to set them free!’

‘Dearest,’ replied the comte, ‘in your presence does our safety lie; your weakness will be our strength; fear not what may happen to us, but live; the love that binds us will still prove our salvation and our joy.’

CHAPTER XV.

‘HOME! sweet home!’ we cry even if during our absence it has been all joy to us, and no feelings of pain or sadness have visited us! With what a delightful restlessness we roam over every part dear to us—to the window where the sun’s rays are softest, and where the view is we appreciate the most; to the room associated in our mind with pleasant moments, with its easy chair where fancy-free our sweetest dreams have come to us, and its thick carpet our feet touch with a comfortable sense of recognition. And

how fondly our heads are laid against the pillow to which we have whispered our dearest hopes!

How much dearer are those friends who have returned home with us! How we like to recall thoughts had in common! Do you remember this? we ask, or—How happy we were then?—Have you forgotten that sweet moment of laughter?

And even if there has been sorrow, how softened it is by the grateful feelings that now fill the heart. Ah! how we cling to things we love! How we cling to our earthly paradise!

And Renée was again at home, and flitted from place to place. There the chevalier had asked her to be his bride; there their hands had pressed each other in the dance; there she had heard of Rohan's first exploit, and even now remem-

bered the sharp pain it had given her ; there they all had been together listening to some favourite music, or been captivated by a loved voice. Oh ! how dear they were those friends who for some time now had lived with her, and had accompanied her steps on the highway of life.

And for them also her home was their home on that day ; for them also the place was full of reminiscences they cherished. It was dear to them through its own beauty and through the charm of her presence. What captivating pleasure in retracing each past event, each past dream ! The chevalier clung to her, met her glance with rapture, heard her voice with ever new delight. But Rohan was happier away, happier where she was not. For him it was the woods that they had trod

together that touched his heart,—the flower gardens she had trimmed,—the view of the sea they had admired together. But what was he doing now at Kerguennec? he asked himself.

‘Renée, let us stop here for ever,’ said the chevalier to her. ‘Let us marry at once and forget all about the wickedness going on in the world.’

But then a gentle sigh would come.

‘Hush, hush, let us live at rest through this day; let us not wake up what makes the heart tremble. Look at the sea, how calm it is! How, though it be winter, the sun shines! It may soon be winter for us—yet should to-day the sun of gratitude shine in our hearts and leave us satisfied with what is. To-day let us be happy and live.—Ah! Monsieur Rohan, where have you been?’

‘To our woods ; the thick carpet of grass and moss is still green, and the pine-tree is as strong as ever, and there is a crispness in the atmosphere that speaks of strength that should be used—a reproach to my indolent life.’

‘Ah ! men, you are all alike, always dissatisfied. You cannot stop awhile to contemplate. Thoughts of action must come in. How can men and women ever agree ! When happy, we would like to stop the flight of time ; but you would speed it on. The happiness of the present brings a safe standing-place to us, but it is always with you regrets and longings. Ah ! how great is the ingratitude of men !’—And the sweet words of reproach lost themselves in a sweeter smile still.

The young chevalier said, softly,

‘Renée, I am happy, but I long for

more happiness ; and how can I help longing ?’

Rohan looked at them both, and a great pain shot through his frame. But he said nothing. ‘ Regrets, longings,’ had she said. He had no right to regrets, no right to longings ! But he felt he could be brave and strong, and even in his pain there was the comfort of knowing this.

The comtesse, reclining in her chair, welcomed the sea-breeze, which was felt even indoors—welcomed the grand sight of the waves rolling in majesty far away. She would be better now ; this was the atmosphere which to her was life, the view which brought her nearer to her Creator.

‘ I cannot sing like the lark,’ she murmured softly to herself, ‘ I cannot rise through space like the eagle, but I can praise God and be thankful—thankful for peace and sympathy in love.’

And her eyes left space to rest on her husband at a small distance from her.

‘Dear friend, it is sweet to be at home again, is it not?’ she asked.

He rose and came to her.

‘You feel better already, do you not? You will soon feel stronger, and I am glad; perhaps we also shall be able to go away.’

‘Oh, speak not to-day of going away. I had for one moment forgotten. We are at peace here. We shall so remain, shall we not?’

‘Forgive me. I should not have said it; but our fate is linked with that of a nation, and troubles will come to us, even though that nation’s welfare were our last thought and care. Better face the truth, and get accustomed to it than lull ourselves into a false sense of security. Besides, dear wife, love will follow you wherever you are; love is the one thing

we have from Heaven that is faithful unto death. Be very courageous; we all love you,' he added, smiling, and stroking her hair gently. 'Let us join hands, and give each other strength. You will be strong, will you not?'

'Strong! strong! Ah! it is easy for the healthy to speak of strength, easy when life courses rapidly through one's veins, and the warm blood rushes to one's cheeks; easy to dance and whirl round and round when the head is not sick; to talk loud and rapidly when the tongue is not tied by feebleness! Dear friend, ask me not to be strong; let me shelter my weakness in your strength, hide my poor aching head in your bosom! If sorrow comes, it is you who will save; I am but a burden and your care. Therefore, let me shut my eyes to what may come, enjoy the present awhile by your

side. As long as you are near, I am safe—and this is such a happy day !’

And in the evening, when brought together, Renée sang their sweet and homely melodies, and they all thought also—this has been such a happy day.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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